

INDIAN FOLKLORE

RAM SATYA MUKHARJI.

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Presented to Lt. Col. R. Cobb, I.M.S.,
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6/2/06

INDIAN FOLKLORE

BY

RAM SATYA MUKHARJI,

SUB-REGISTRAR OF ASSURANCES, AND HONY-MAGISTRATE
INDEPENDENT BENCH, TAMLUK, DISTRICT MIDNAPUR.

In winter's tedious night, sit by the fire
With good old *folk*, and let them tell the tales.—*Shak.*

(First edition.)

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To

His Highness the Honourable Sir

Rameshwar Singh, B. C. S. C.,

MAHARAJA BAHADUR OF DARBHANGA.

THIS BOOK

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

FOR HIS KIND INTEREST MANIFESTED IN

THE AUTHOR'S HUMBLE LITERARY

EFFORT.

PREFACE.

My long cherished desire is realized at last in ¹² being able to publish the Indian folklore. It struck me some time ago that the little amusing folklore stories current in India should be put together and published in a book form. In my boyhood being very fond of hearing stories, I learnt most of the tales in this book, and I made addition to my stock in subsequent years by noting down every now and then any new story that I heard. So far as I am aware, most of the tales were never put in print before, and this is the first time, I believe, that they have been put together in the present form. In doing so, of course, I do not claim any originality or boast as an author; my humble object is to attempt at a wider circulation of these popular tales through the medium of the English language which is now understood in almost all the quarters of the globe. Of course, I felt some difficulty in places in rendering the translation into English. It is not a very easy task to make a true and idiomatic translation of the folklore of a country. In fact there are phrases in some of the stories such that their translation is simply impracticable. However, I have devoted my best care and attention to the book, and it is for the readers to judge how far I have been successful.

I reserve many more stories for future publication and if I receive encouragement from my kind readers, I may bring them out in a second part.

Before I conclude I must acknowledge with best thanks, the help I have received from my esteemed friends Babu Kali Prasad Chatterji of the Bengal Provincial Civil Service who narrated some of the stories, to me, and Babu Ram Chandra Ghosh M. A., B. L., who has very kindly gone through the proofs.

TAMLUK,
The 3rd June, 1904.

} R. S. M.

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INDIAN FOLKLORE.

I. HOW DARRAF KHAN BECAME A HINDU.

DARRAF KHAN, as the name indicates, was a follower of Islam. He lived in a village on the bank of the sacred Bhagirathi.

It was evening, and the setting sun lingered over the treetops of the adjoining forest, as they stood out, against the golden gleam of the sky. The cool breeze which had sprung up from the broad bosom of the holy stream sighed through the dense foliage. The cattle were wending their way homeward from their pastury, on the outskirts of the forest. The shades were deepening where the trees stood thick, in the forest depth, and the gentle stillness was broken, now and again, by the cawing, here and there, of a homeward bound crow. It was one of the scenes of still life peculiar to rural Bengal.

And Darraf Khan was out enjoying the evening breeze, to watch the black hulls of the boats on the river, disappearing in the deepening shades, and to commune with nature, in her most solemn mood. He unconsciously walked into the forest, thinking of many strange things, and sat down at the foot of a tree, with his attention riveted to the first star that appeared on the darkening sky.

A peal of unearthly laughter suddenly smote his ears. It echoed loud, and shrill, through the forest depth, and Darraf, though Pathan he was, felt creeping over him a chill of fear, as he heard it. He recovered himself, however, from its effects, and listened, intent on finding out the source of the sound which had so terrified him. Presently he heard a voice in the forest gloom exclaim: "My dear sister! you seem to be unusually merry this evening, will you not tell me the reason?" Another voice answered: "Merry! yes, of course I am. Do you not know that to-morrow will be my wedding day? Bhutu Chandal of the neighbouring village is going to be gored to death by a mad bull to-morrow, for so it has been ordained by the Fates. To-morrow being a saturday, and the planets favorable, a *Chandal* dying a violent death, will have to come to our plane of astral entities. Bhutu Chandal, therefore, will be one of us to-morrow, and our gracious Sovereign has been pleased to promise him to me, as my husband. Think, therefore, if I have not cause for merriment."

Darraf Khan heard this ærial conversation. As a Pathan he was ready to face all earthly dangers manfully. But to be present at a conversation between entities of another plane—entities, which he believed were entirely evil in their nature—quite unnerved him. He shook with fear. But he knew Bhutu, for whom according to the unearthly voices, such a fate was in store on the morrow ; and what is more, he had a liking for Bhutu. He, therefore, wanted to save him, if possible, and with a strong effort, succeeded in shaking off the terror which had possessed him. Then with the readiness, and promptitude of a soldier that he was, he began to cast about in his mind for the means, by which Bhutu might be saved from the terrible fate which awaited him.

Pondering over what he had heard, and discussing in his own mind, how to save Bhutu from his impending fate, Darraf Khan returned home. He passed the night anxiously waiting for the dawn. As soon as the first streaks of grey light had appeared on the eastern horizon, he hastened to the Chandal quarter of the village where Bhutu resided. He saw Bhutu, and besought him earnestly, to keep within doors for that day, if he loved his life. Bhutu did not know the reason, which led Darraf Khan, to make this strange request, but he was much impressed by Darraf's earnestness, and promised him that he would not stir out of his hut, that day. Darraf, in order to make assurance doubly

sure, locked Bhutu up in his hut, and took away the key with him.

Satisfied with his morning's work, yet by no means easy in his mind, for the fatal day was yet young, Darraf Khan returned home. At noon, he sat in his *varanda*, watching, from time to time, the progress of the sun in the heavens, and solacing himself, now and again, with a pull at his *Hukka*. Suddenly he started at the cry of "Fire !" "Fire !", and casting his eyes towards the Chandals' quarter, he clearly discerned a vast column of dense smoke rising slowly into the clear blue of the midday sky. He dropped the pipe of his *Hukka*, and ran out of the house in the direction of the fire, as he had the key of the hut in which Bhutu was locked up. He arrived breathless at the Chandals' quarter, and saw the house of Bhutu on fire. The neighbours, before the arrival of the Khan, had broken open the door of the hut in which Bhutu had been locked up. But no sooner had Bhutu come out of his hut, than a mad bull had gored him to death. And Darraf Khan saw before him the mangled remains of the man whom he had so vainly attempted to save. "Who can contend against destiny ?" exclaimed the Khan, and then wiping the perspiration from his brow, and stroking his beard absentmindedly, he strode off homeward.

In the evening, Darraf Khan, as usual, walked into the same forest, and as he was pondering

deeply on all that he had seen and heard, suddenly, as on the night before, an unearthly voice met his ears. He recognized it, and listened in fear and trembling. The speakers were the same ones of the previous night. The first said : "Why do you weep, Sister dear?" and there was an answer to the question by broken sobs : "I weep because all my hopes are blasted. The bull which gored Bhutu Chandal to death, had on its horns, a few grains of sacred soil from the bed of the holy Bhagirathi, the mere touch of which, was sufficient to send Bhutu, after his death to Paradise. I shall not, therefore, have him for my husband. Alas ! I do not know how long I shall have to wait, for a husband."

Darraf Khan stood there bewildered. He thought : A few grains of earth from the river bed had such virtue in them as to translate a soul destined to an evil future to Paradise ! It was marvellous !! After considering all that he had heard and seen Darraf Khan believed in the sacredness of the Bhagirathi, and that She was an important factor in the visible manifestation of the *Mahasakti* (the primordial force) of the supreme unconditioned *Brâhma*, and thenceforth he became as devout a Hindu, as he had been a devout Mahomedan. His famous Sanskrit hymn to the Bhagirathi, which, being well known to most of my Hindu readers, I refrain from quoting here, was the out pouring of his sincere faith in his new religion.



II. THE HERMIT WHO FAILED IN HIS DUTIES.

AT a certain village in Bengal, there lived a Bráhmaṇ with his wife and a troop of children. He was very poor, and had to maintain his family, literally by the "sweat of his brow." Though he had to work hard the whole day long, to earn his livelihood, he never missed his daily *Pujas* (devotions). To save time, he had, of course, to perform them with all possible haste. After his morning ablutions, he would run to the nearest *Bel* tree, pluck some of its leaves, and offer them to his God Mahadev. Then he would take a hasty meal and go out for his day's work, returning home late in the evening.

Time flew in this way. One evening, as the Brahman was sitting on the *veranda* of his house, his children around him, and his wife near by, an old Hermit came in, and asked for shelter. The Bráhmaṇ, though poor, was always hospitable. He never refused shelter to any one, that wanted it. The asectic was, therefore, received with all the

respect due to a man of his age and sanctity. He was shown over to a room, and was requested to stay in the house, for as many days as he pleased.

The ascetic had made some spiritual progress and had acquired some superhuman powers. He could see spiritual things which ordinary people could not. He was a clairvoyant. He had been passing his days in austere penance and self-denial since his boyhood, and now that he wished to have an experience of the world and its ways, he stopped for some days at the house of the Bráhmaṇ.

It so happened, that during the ascetic's stay at the Bráhmaṇ's house, the latter was taken ill ; the illness grew worse, day by day, and of it the Bráhmaṇ, at last, died. As the Hermit was a clairvoyant, he could see that just as the Bráhmaṇ was giving up the ghost, a *Sivadut* (angel of God Siva) entered the room with a *Puspakrath* (flower charriot), and, invisible to physical eyes, carried away the astral body of the Bráhmaṇ to *Siva-lok* (heaven of God Siva).

At this sight, the serenity of the ascetic's mind was disturbed by a doubt, which arose in it. "When the Bráhmaṇ could be taken to heaven for his daily offering only a handful of *Bel* leaves to his God Mahadev," so he soliloquised. "it must, indeed, be a very easy way to salvation. When salvation could be had in the midst of domestic enjoyment, and at such a small cost, what is the use of such self-abnegation as

I have been practising since my boyhood ? I closely watched the daily routine of the Bráhmaṇ's life, but found him working almost all the day long, to earn his bread and what he did for the purpose of his salvation, was simply the daily throwing of a few *Bel* leaves at his Mahadev. If salvation could be had so easily, and without any sacrifice, why should I be so foolish as to practise all this austere penance ? I have sacrificed everything, since my childhood, never enjoyed the bliss of a happy home, and all, it now appears, for no very meritorious use." These and the like thoughts crossed his mind, and the anchorite made it up not to go back to his hermitage any more, but to re-enter this "vale of tears" with which he had cut off all connection since his infancy. He took his permanent abode in the Brahman's house, and as the widowed Bráhmīni wanted a man to look after her affairs, the ascetic volunteered his services which the old lady gladly accepted.

And now the Hermit began to live as a member of the late Bráhmaṇ's family. He loved the Bráhmaṇ's children, and they in their turn, became fond of him. He would seldom stir out of the house, unless pressed by the Bráhmīni to do so. In the morning, after his ablutions he would offer a few *Bel* leaves to Mahadev, and then for the rest of the day he would play and sport with the children.

The ascetic thus lived for some years in the Bráhmaṇ's house. At length his last day drew

near; and when his soul was about to bid good by to its old tenement, he was horrified in beholding the *Yâmduts* (Pluto's messengers) standing by his death-bed, instead of the *Shivaduts*, as he had all along been expecting. His agony grew terribly acute at the sight of the *Yâmduts*. His pale face grew paler, his lips quivered, and an excruciating pain convulsed his whole frame. He gave a faint shriek, and then was silent for a moment. At length he mustered up his courage, faced the grim *Yâmduts*, and spoke to them as follows :—

Hermit—Begone villains, why are you here?

Yâmdut—Your time is up, we are here to take you to hell.

Hermit—Hell ! why to hell ?

Yâmdut—That's what you deserve

Hermit—That's what I deserve ! and why ?

Yâmdut—You have failed as an ascetic, and you have failed as a man of the world. And hell is the portion of those who fail in their duties.

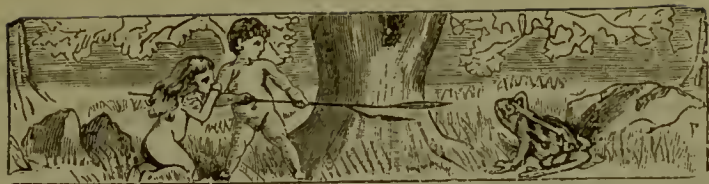
Hermit—Why ? Did I not do the very same thing that the Brâhman, in whose house I came to live, did, and for which he was taken to heaven ? Did I not offer my *Bel* leaves daily to Mahadev like him ?

Yâmdut—Not exactly. You failed miserably. The case of the pious Brâhman was quite different from that of yours. He had to work the whole day to feed a host of children and his wife, and in spite of

such a heavy burden on him, he managed to snatch a few moments to worship his God daily ; whereas you who had no such work to do, only grew fat on the rice of the widow, threw a few *Bel* leaves on Mahadev, and idled away all the rest of your valuable time. This is not what was expected of you. Go you must to hell.

Saying this the *Yâmduts* carried the struggling astral body of the ascetic with them to Pluto's dreary dome, and consigned it to the place it best deserved.





III. A DOOMED CONVICT.

DURING the reign of a certain Hindu King in India, a Bráhmaṇ committed a murder, for which he would have been sentenced to capital punishment, had not his caste protected him. The convict being a Bráhmaṇ, the law prohibited his execution, but the King thought of his destruction in another way.

The Darbar assembled, the King sat on the *Masnad* (throne) and pronounced the following Judgment upon the trembling convict : " Prisoner at the bar ! Bráhmaṇ though you are, you have committed such an atrocious crime that nothing short of capital punishment would meet the ends of justice, but the law spares you, as you happen to be a Bráhmaṇ, so I pass the following sentence : That you be incarcerated in the State Jail for this night, and that you do choose any one of the four things that you will find in the four corners of the cell for your use for the night ; if you fail to select one, by the rising of to-morrow's sun, your nose and ears will be cut off, and you will be banished from the realm. Now beware and begone."

No sooner had the Judgment been pronounced than the convict was dragged away from the *Darbar* hall, and thrown into the prison. The heavy grated doors were shut from outside. From the light of a lamp, burning in the centre of the cell, the convict was soon able to distinguish the four objects mentioned in the Judgment, in as many corners of the prison. The objects were : (1) a beauteous damsel of sixteen summers in Mahomedan attire, (2) a tempting dish of savoury meat just out of the *Dekchi*, (cooking pan), (3) a sparkling bottle of liquor, and (4) a shining phial labelled poison.

Now, the convict debated within himself what to do. He would have to select any one of the four things for his night's use, or his banishment with mutilated limbs was sure at the rising of the morrow's sun. At first he wavered between selecting one of the articles, and the banishment with mutilation. The idea of the latter saddened his heart, and he decided to make the selection. Now, which one of the four to select, was the next question. To select the beauteous girl, thought he, was out of question, as she was by all appearance a Mahomedan; to partake of the meat was impossible for a Bráhmaṇ; to drink the poison and commit suicide, for which sin, the *Shastras* provide no *prayashchitya* (purification) is equally impossible; to drink the intoxicating liquor is no less a sin.

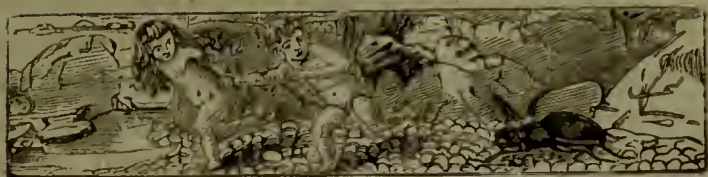
He paused, and pondered for a long time, but

could not induce himself to accept any one of the four presents the King was so graciously pleased to provide for his reception in the prison. Once more he thought of accepting the banishment, but the idea of the trouble and the insult which would result from it, again stood in the way. The damsel in the prison corner looked askance at the confused convict, and laughed. The prisoner deliberated long, but failed yet to come to a definite conclusion. It was past midnight. At last, with much difficulty, he induced himself to select the liquor for his use as the next worst. He opened the bottle, and took a draught. In a few minutes it worked in his brain, and induced him to take another draught. Another and yet another followed, till, at length, the Bráhmaṇ became thoroughly drunk. Every good thought vanished from his mind; the vice from which he had hitherto shrunk back with terror, now had full mastery over him, and under the influence of the liquor its ugliness had disappeared. The liquor, he had drunk, sharpened his appetite, and he felt hungry like a wolf; and as his good sense had already left, he fell to the meat and devoured it with the voracity of a glutton. The liquor, and the meat did their work so thoroughly, that the Bráhmaṇ, no longer hesitated to make love with the prison girl, whom he had, a few minutes before, loathed even to touch. Along with the night, however, his intoxication passed away, and when the

day broke, he was quite conscious again. Bitter repentance now arose in his mind, and to his utter dismay, he found that he was a lost man—lost in this life, as well as in the life to come. His life hang heavily on him, and to get rid of it, he drank the content of the phial labelled poison. And no sooner did he take it than he dropped down dead on the cold stone floor of the cell, before the turnkey had come to unlock the doors.

The King heard from the girl, the details of the convict's action, and was glad that his plan had succeeded well.





IV. "GANDDHARVA SEN MARGAYA?!"

(*Ganddharva Sen is dead?!).*

WHILE an eastern Monarch was holding his *Darbar*, his old Vizir rushed in, lamenting and crying piteously. On being asked by the Monarch the reason for his lamentations, he kissed the foot of the throne, bowed down his head almost to the ground, and replied.—*Khodawand! Ganddharva Sen Mârgayâ* (*Khodaband! Ganddharva Sen is dead*) "Ah! Allah! poor Ganddharva Sen is dead!," exclaimed the Emperor and burst into tears. The *Darbar* broke up, and everybody was ordered to observe the usual mourning for 41 days, in memory of the deceased, and the *Badsha* repaired to his *Harem* weeping. The *Begams* of the *Harem*, seeing the *Badsha* in such grief, enquired of the reason, and being told in a choked voice that Ganddharva Sen was dead, they all began to cry, and beat their breast. The whole *zenana* presented a scene of great grief and consequent confusion. A servant girl of the senior Begam, hearing the noise, hastened to the chamber and asked the Begam: "*Badshazadi! what are you*

all crying for ?” The Begam drew a deep sigh, and said : “Oh dear ! poor Ganddharva Sen is dead ” The girl anxiously asked ; “Who was Ganddharva Sen to your Majesty ?” “Oh ! indeed,” exclaimed the Begam, “that I don’t know,” and she ran to the *Badsha*, and asked him who Ganddharva Sen was, that they were lamenting his death. The *Badsha*, failing to give any reply, felt ashamed, and went to his *Darbar* Hall, sent for the Vizir, and on his appearance asked him : “Vizir ! who was Ganddharva Sen that we are all mourning his death”. “Pardon, Bandenawaz !” exclaimed the Vizir, “your slave is not aware of who Ganddharva Sen was, but he saw the *Kotowal* crying, and saying that Ganddharva Sen was dead, and so he cried for company.” “Thou art an arrant fool”—thundered forth the Monarch, “go and enquire who Ganddharva Sen was.” The Vizir bowed, and ran as fast as his legs could carry him, but he met the *Kotowal* near the palace gate and asked him who Ganddharva Sen was. The *Kotowal* looked vacantly at the Vizir’s face, and said that he did not know who the late Ganddharva Sen was, but as the Jamadar came crying for him and said that poor Ganddharva Sen was dead, he wept and informed the Vizir of it. Then they both went to the *Jamadar*; the *Kotowal* asked him who Ganddharva Sen was for whose death he had wept, “Oh sir !” replied the *Jamadar*, “I can’t say who or what he was, but as I saw my wife was weeping over the death of

Gandharva Sen, I felt pity for her, and went weeping to you, to report his death. You know, sir, that crying, and laughing excite sympathetic emotions, and I cried because my wife did so." The three, then, went to the *Jamadar's* wife, who as well denied any personal knowledge of the deceased, and simply replied that as she had gone to bathe in the tank, she saw the village *Dhovin* crying bitterly and saying that her Gandharva Sen was dead. The party then proceeded to the *Dhovin's* house, and asked her as to what Gandharva Sen was to her, that she had cried so piteously in the morning, for his death, "Oh! Ill luck to me!" cried out the *Dhovin* "my heart bleeds for him still, he was my pet donkey. I loved him as my own son," so saying the *Dhovin* again burst into tears. The party felt ashamed, and quickly dispersed.

The Vizir returned to the palace sadder, but wiser. He prostrated himself before the Monarch, revealed the sad truth—that the deceased Gandharva Sen was no other than a *Dhovin's* donkey. The Badsha pardoned him.

When the news reached the *Harem*, the Begams burst forth into loud laughter, and made themselves merry, at the cost of the Badsha and his courtiers. They went on laughing till their sides ached.



V. FAITH.

ON a fine autumn morning the divine couple *Hara* and *Parvati* were taking an aerial excursion round the earth. When they were passing over the *Tribeni ghat*, (trijunction of the Ganga, the Jamuna and the Sarswati) Parvati's eyes fell upon the immense crowd that had assembled below. She asked her consort :

"Lord ! what is that huge gathering for ?"

"To day is," my love ! "replied Hara," "an auspicious day. People, by their ablutions in the *Tribeni* waters; will have their sins of this and previous births washed away and will go to Heaven."

"If it be so, Lord !" asked Parvati again, "why then is your hell so very full always ?"

"The query does not befit you, dear !" retorted Hara, "I will, however, explain this by a practical example."

Saying this, he whispered some thing to Parvati's ear, and they both descended at the *Ghat*. Hara became a corpse, and Parvati sat by its side and began to weep. The attention of the bathers was drawn ; they gathered round the spot and enquired about

the matter. Parvati explained to them in broken sobs that as they had been coming to bathe in the *Tribeni ghât*, her husband, tripped and fell down suddenly and died, and that she being a woman—alone and helpless—knew not how to cremate her husband's dead body. The by standers were moved and several of them volunteered to help her. Parvati thanked them and said :

“There is one thing, gentlemen, to which I must draw your attention first before I avail myself of your kind help. My husband, when dying, enjoined me that none but persons free from sins, should touch his dead body ; a sinner touching the corpse will die instantly. Now gentlemen ! if under the circumstance, you think you can help me, kindly delay not the cremation.”

The volunteers shrank back and dispersed. No one would come near Parvati again ; she sat there alone and weeping till two drunkards, who had evidently passed the night in a house of ill-fame, came to her aid. Parvati told them all, and warned them that persons not purified of their sins, must not touch the corpse, and that if they did so, they would die instantly.

“Foh !” shouted the drunkards, “you want sinless men to cremate the corpse ? That is very easy, especially today. We will return in a minute washing off all our sins.”

Saying this, they ran into the waters of the

Tribeni, came back in drenched cloth, shouldered the corpse, and carried it to the cremation-ground. But no sooner was the corpse carried there than it vanished as well as the goddess Parvati.

Hara.—“Now my love ! you see how few of these men will be benefited by the bathing ! Only those who have faith, firm faith in the holy waters of the *Tribeni* will alone have their sins washed. It is the faith, and not the ablutions alone, that purifies a man of his sins. Of all the bathers of to-day the two drunkards only had absolute faith in the ablutions, and they alone were fit to go to heaven above the rest.

Parvati bowed silently and the journey was resumed.





VI. THE BRAHMAN, AND HIS IDOLS.

ONCE upon a time there lived a *Bráhma*n who though married, was childless. All the same, however, the Brahman loved his wife. He had a good many idols of different metals in the house for worship. Having had a moderate income from his rentfree lands, the Brahman passed his days happily in the worship of his family gods. Neither cares nor anxieties ever crossed his mind, till one day he was disturbed by the thought of finding out which of the gods, whose images he worshipped, was the most powerful. He considered the merits of the idols one by one, but failed to decide about their comparative superiority. He meditated for days together, but yet was in the same state of doubt and indecision. The question sat heavily upon his mind and disturbed his peace. His looks showed that he was unhappy. His wife perceived this change and enquired of its cause, but he would give no reply. By and by he became demented. He would come out of the house and wander aimlessly through the streets of the village with the ques-

tion constantly on his lips as to which of his idols was the best. Men mocked, boys ran after him, and the village grew too hot for him altogether. He then took shelter in a neighbouring forest, though his wife tried her best to dissuade him.

One day as he was wandering listlessly in the forest, he saw a wood-cutter, and questioned him as to the relative superiority of his family idols. The wood-cutter taking him for a mad man wantonly replied: "The idol that stands the best test under a smith's hammer is the most powerful." The Brahman readily accepted the answer and returned home. The first thing accordingly that he did was to get a hammer from the nearest blacksmith, and with it he began striking his idols in order to test their toughness or power as he called it. All the idols as could be expected, broke to pieces save one, which being made of solid bronze stood the proof of the hammer. The Brahman selected this image for his worship, and flung the shattered pieces of the other images into a tank. His wife, however, wept at the sacrilege, scolded him, and tried to bring him back to his senses, but to no effect. She was frightened, too, at what her husband had done, as she expected that the wrath of the gods would fall on their heads.

The idol that passed the hard ordeal of the hammer was an image of *Srikrishnaji*. The Brahman began worshipping it with deep devotion.

He would sit before it for hours together forgetting hunger and thirst. So very absorbed did he become in his thoughts while worshipping, that he could not, catch even the sound of drums if beaten near him. In short, he became, while engaged in worship, so thoroughly absorbed in the meditation of his idol that he hardly perceived the existence of the outer world for the time.

An incident happened one day which made the *Bráhmaṇ* still firmer in his new faith. He had performed the *Pujā* with his accustomed zeal, but when he rose he found, to his utter surprise, that the offering of rice and fruits which he had placed before the idol had disappeared. His joy knew no bounds, as he believed that Srikrishna must have partaken of them himself. Thenceforward his faith in the idol became unshaken; more so, as he found that the offerings disappeared every day with the most unfailing regularity.

One day as the Brahman had just opened his eyes accidentally in the midst of his meditations before the idol, he saw a big rat running into a hole in the *Pujā* room. His firm faith in the powers of the idol was shaken. He now began to think that it was the rat and not the idol that had been daily eating the offerings of his *Pujās*.

The doubt destroyed the serenity of his mind. When he sat down to worship the next day, he could not concentrate his thoughts as on previous

days, and remained consequently quite alive to the external world. The rat, as was its wont, came and was caught by the Brahman. He now began to think that the wood-cutter must have misled him. The idol he was worshipping could never be the most powerful ; for, if that had been so, the rat would not have been allowed to eat his offerings. The idol instead of being the all powerful one was evidently a powerless image. His faith in the figure was shaken, and he consigned it to the same tank in which lay the broken remains of its former companions. The rat, thought the Brahman, must be more powerful than all the idols, and, therefore, was the most proper object of worship. So the rat was duly installed on the throne vacated by the idol and he went on worshipping it with the same fervour and devotion that he had paid to the idol. The rat proved to be a god thoroughly alive, as it ate up the offerings before the very eyes of the Brahman himself.

It so happened, that one morning as the Brahman was deeply engaged in his meditation before the rat-god, a cat sprang upon it and tore it away from the throne. "What !" thought the Brahman, "the cat must be more powerful than the rat or else why the rat should allow itself thus to be carried off by the former. The cat then was the fittest object of worship." Now the cat occupied the place of the rat, and the *Brahman* began worshipping her with great devotion. The cat

grew fat and fatter on the milk offered to her by her worshipper. The Brahman would reserve the greater portion of the milk from his cow for the cat, and would himself drink but very little of it. His wife did not like this, but there was no help for it, as the least wish of the Brahman was law in the house. She, however, hated the creature. One day the cat wishing for more milk than was allowed to her overturned the milk-pan. The Brahman's wife, who was peeling some vegetables with a knife at the time flung it in a rage at the cat. The weapon hit the creature in a vital part and it dropped down dead. The lady was frightened at this act of her, as she knew that her husband would not spare the killer of his feline deity. She apprehended the direst consequence. There was, however, no help for it. She disposed of the dead cat in the best way she could. But what excuse would she make for the cat's disappearance to her husband? How would she account to her husband for the cat's absence when he would enquire about it. These were the thoughts that troubled her sorely, and she became very uneasy in mind. Failing to devise any excuse, she thought it best to allow things to take their own course and resumed her household work which the cat's death had interrupted for the moment. The Brahman who had been out when the catastrophe upon his deity had fallen came home, bathed and entered his *Puja* room. The cat was so fond of him that no sooner

would he enter the room than she would come to him mewling and wagging her tail, and would caress his legs by rubbing herself against them. But now there was no Mother Tabby to welcome him. The Brahman called out for the pussy, but she did not turn up ; he called again and again but to no purpose. The Brahman called his wife and asked her what had become of the cat. The wife fearing to tell a lie to her husband whom she was enjoined by the *Sastras* to worship as her god, told him what had really happened. The Brahman, much to his wife's relief, looked at the death of the cat from a point of view different from that which his wife had expected. He exclaimed : "My dear ! thou art even more powerful than the cat as it has succumbed to thy strength ; so I must worship thee henceforth." The wife got ashamed, bent down her head, but dared not reply. The Brahman took her into the *Puja* room and made her sit down on a dias, the throne on which his former idols had sat not being big enough to hold her. He began worshipping her as the most powerful deity of all he had known.

A few days passed in this way. And they were days of hard trial for the Brahman's wife. It was very difficult for her to have to sit still and in the same posture for hours together, while the husband worshipped her. She was always afraid of causing disturbance by changing her position or moving. One day

the worst that she had apprehended happened ; she actually moved and roused the *Bráhma*n from his deep reverie. Instantly he gave a slap right across her cheek and she was stunned and fell down senseless. The *Bráhma*n soon realized what he had done, hastily fetched some water and bathed her face and eyes with it, and the wife slowly came to regain her consciousness. The *Bráhma*n dismissed her with kind words. When he was alone, he thought that the wife certainly was not the most powerful person in the creation as she had fallen senseless under his blow, and that he himself was the most powerful. And now true knowledge dawned upon him. He began to perceive the importance of his ownself. He found that his arm that gave the blow to his wife was a mere instrument of him, but that the strength which moved it must be somewhere in his person. He should worship that strength or the *Mahasakti* in him. He should know his own self and realize it. For this purpose he began worshipping his inner self. In due course of time, by this process, he knew the great Spirit working in and through himself and every other thing in the universe, and was liberated from the bonds of *karma* (action).





VII. THE FISHWIFE'S STONE WEIGHT.

A *Bráhmaṇ*, while passing through a fish-market, happened to see a stone weight in the scale of a Fisherwoman which appeared to him to be a *Salagrám Sila* (Stone Emblem of the Supreme Being). He drew near, examined it closely, and found it to be a genuine *Salagrám*. He was quite disgusted with the woman for her so using the sacred Emblem of worship ; for she was weighing out her fish with it and casting it carelessly on the ground when not in requisition. The *Brahmán* wished to have it for worship at any rate, and offered a *Rupee* to the woman as its price. She, however, declined the offer, and said that as the stone had ensured good luck to her since the day she had picked it up from the Ganges bed, she would not part with it on any account. The *Bráhmaṇ* raised his offer, but the woman still declined. But as he was determined to have the stone image, the *Bráhmaṇ* at last offered a heavy sum. The amount being beyond her expectation, the woman could no longer withstand the temptation, and parted with her weight.

The *Bráhmaṇ* went home with the *Salagrám* in

a merry mood. He having purified it with the five varieties of cow's excrescence (*Panchagavya*) installed it on the throne with the other idols of the house. During the night, while the *Bráhmaṇ* was fast asleep, the idol god appeared to him in all its divine brilliancy and said :

"Fool ! why hast thou brought me under thy roof. I love the fishwife's scale better than thy throne. Send me back at once, or keep me back if thou wantest thy destruction and that of thy family."

The *Bráhmaṇ* started from his slumber, and awoke with a heavy heart. He, however, did not pay much heed to the dream, and passed it over as the mere creation of his disturbed brain. But the dream repeating itself the next night, made the *Bráhmaṇ* disconsolate. He said to himself : "Have I, then, actually incurred, the wrath of the God *Narayan* by removing Him to my house ? But, how can that be ? He is surely in a better place now, and I do not think, I have failed in my devotion to Him. Why does He, then, want to go back to the fish scale ? Be that as it may, I will, on no account, part with Him, since I have once got Him at my house. I care not for the consequence, whatever it might be. I will go on worshipping Him." The *Bráhmaṇ* was a pious devotee and resolved firmly not to part with the stone Emblem, but to keep it for good or for evil."

The dreadful dream began to be realized actually from the next day. The only child of the *Bráhmaṇ* who was hale and hearty suddenly got ill and expired. The devotee with pious resignation calmly bore the shock and was not shaken a bit from his firm resolution. But this was not all. He dreamt again. This time, he was warned of the death of his wife, if the idol was not sent back. But he remained as firm in his resolve as before. He would not part with the holy stone on any account. His wife died the next morning, but he did not shed a drop of tear, and was calm and quiet. The next night the stone god appeared unto the *Bráhmaṇ* in his dream for the fourth time and wanted to be removed. If this was not done, a thunderbolt would burst upon him on the morning. The *Bráhmaṇ* received the decree of his fate with no greater concern than he had done on previous occasions, though this time it was the question of his own life and death.

The day dawned. The *Bráhmaṇ* after performing the necessary worship of the idol, put it upon his head, came out of his *Puja* room and sat in the open courtyard of the house awaiting his doom. The hitherto serene surface of the firmament began to be clouded. A heavy mass of cloud by and by overspread the whole sky, the heavens grew darker and darker and completely hid the sun. The bright day turned gloomy. The wind

became high, and with it came a heavy downpour and occasional thunder claps. Vivid lightnings flashed fast and quick. Loud peals of thunder rent the whole firmament, and the thunder bolts began to strike the trees close to the *Bráhmaṇ*. Expecting death every moment, he sat, calmly with the idol on his head. He was quite prepared to meet death rather than part with his idol. He thought of dying with the idol on his head, and would not leave it on any account. The warfare of the elements continued till evening. When lo! the clouds began to scatter, nature became pacified again. The storm abated. The moon shone bright, and shortly a calm after the storm reigned over the earth and the heavens.

Being glad that his devotee has got successfully over the hard ordeal, the God Narayan appeared to him in a halo of brilliant light with all his grandeur and glory, having his four ensigns—the conchshell, the circular sword, the mace, and the lotus—one in each of his four mighty hands. The brilliancy of the God dazzled the devotee's eyes. However, he fixed his gaze upon the holy figure and actually saw, the original form before him—form which he had hitherto known in his imagination only. His joy was inexpressible. He mechanically prostrated himself before the divinity, kissed his feet and stood up. The God addressed him thus :
“My son ! thou hast stood the test well. I try those

who love me alone, and receive the successful ones. Thy trial is over, come with me to heaven."

So saying, *Nārāyan* took the *Bráhmaṇ* in his flower charriot, ascended up, and vanished in the clouds. The *Bráhmaṇ* was taken to the heaven. There a magnificent edifice of solid gold was set apart for him with necessary furniture and establishment. No sooner was he conducted there than he met his beloved wife and dear son who had been dead, and who clasped him in their fond arms never to part again.





VIII.—NARAD'S DISCOMFITURE.

Devarshi *Nárad*, as the name implies, was a Rishi (Saint) amongst the gods. He, sometimes, thought too much of himself. The all-knowing *Bhagaván Srikrishna* perceiving it, wanted to give him a check.

One day as *Srikrishna* and his divine consort *Lakshmi* were sitting together in *Golak Dhám*, *Nárad* went there to offer his usual daily *Pujas* and prostrated himself at the feet of the holy couple. *Srikrishna* blessed the *Devarshi* and said : "I intend perambulating the earth, wouldst thou accompany me ?" "Most gladly, Lord" said *Nárad* in reply.

The next day *Srikrishna* and *Nárad* descended from heaven to earth and commenced journey. They crossed several rivers and mountains, visited many countries and pushed on their way towards the south. One day as they were passing through a desert, *Srikrishna* feigned to be thirsty, and asked *Nárad* to get some water from a house that stood at the outskirt of the desert. *Nárad* ran towards the house. It was a big mansion, and a stalwart *Rajput*

kept the gate. As *Nárad* had free access even to the *zenana* of the gods, he without asking the permission of the gate-keeper, made his way towards the inner apartments of the house. But he had to deal with a tough customer here on the earth. The gate-keeper caught him by the neck and thrust him out. At this unexpected treatment, *Nárad* was thunderstruck, his rage knew no bounds. Would a mortal treat him thus? With eyes flashing fire *Nárad* looked at the man and exclaimed: "Thou dog! darest thou raise thy hand against *Devarshi Nárad*? Knowest thou not who I am?"

The gate-keeper—"I care not to know of an insignificant mad cap like thee. Get out, or further insults await thee."

Nárad—"Dost thou dare say so to me, villain?"

Thus saying the *Devarshi* wanted to consume the gate-keeper to ashes with the fire that flashed forth from his eyes. The *Rishis* in ancient times, had the power of reducing even adamantine rocks to ashes with the fire that they could produce from their eyes, but *Nárad* failed in the present instance. He tried again and again, but with the same result. He stood stupified over his failure. The fire against which even the mighty Himalayas were not proof lost all its effect upon a common mortal! What could be the reason? *Nárad* thought for a moment, but the insolent gate-keeper did not allow him further time to think. He dragged him to the side of an ocean that

flowed fast within the mansion walls with millions of mundane eggs floating over it. He took up an egg, and holding it before *Narad's* eyes, said ; "Thou tiny creature ! Thou thinkest too much of thyself, now see how insignificant thou art in the creation of the Bhagaván. Look at yonder ocean of time and the countless eggs that are fast flowing through it to eternity each as big and many bigger than this solar system we live in. Thou art but an atom in one of these eggs. Now realize thy position in the creation and be wise and learn to think lowly of thyself." No sooner had he finished, than everything disappeared. *Nárad* looked around and saw only *Srikrishna* standing before him laughing.

Now better sense prevailed upon the *Devarshi*. He understood all that was meant by the phantasm, fell at the God's feet, and said : "Lord ! thou hast given me a lesson to humble down my pride."





IX.—THE KING VIKRAMADITYA AND THE TWO HUMAN SKULLS.

One day while the renowned Raja Vikramaditya of Ujjaini was holding his court, a *Rákshas* (Demon) appeared with two old human skulls and placing them before His Majesty, bowed, and addressed him thus : "Sire ! I have come to test how worthy is your Majesty of your celebrity as a reader of mysteries. Here are two skulls, examine them and tell me which one of them is of a man and which of a woman. I give you a week's time. I will come again on the eighth day, and if your Majesty gives a correct reply, well and good, otherwise I will devour all the men and the beasts of your kingdom." Saying this the *Rákshas* vanished.

After the *Rákshas* had disappeared, the courtiers looked at one another's face and kept silent. The king solemnly asked the *Navaratna* (the Nine Gems) of his *sova* (court) if they would be able to solve the problem, but they nodded their heads in dissent. The "Nine Gems," as they were called, were the as many celebrated literary men

of the time ; the immortal *Kavi* (Poet) Kalidas being at their head. The king dismissing his *Darbár* retired to his *Andarmahal* (harem) with an anxious mind.

The rumour, that the Raja had failed to find out a reply to the query of the *Rákshas* and that the Demon would come on the eighth day and devour everybody, spread like wild fire all over the kingdom. This caused a great panic and a regular stampede began. Before the day fixed for the arrival of the Demon the kingdom was entirely deserted. Even the "Nine gems" of the Court dared not stay. The king and the members of the royal family, were the only persons that remained in the realm.

The poet Kalidas was the last to leave the town. On the evening of the seventh day, that is the evening preceding the morning of the *Rákshas's* advent, he left the town and went into a thick forest which stood at the outskirts of the capital. When he had gone into the midst of the *jungle*, the shades of the night became thick and he missed his way. The ferocious beasts of prey sallied forth from their dens in search of food, and the forest began to resound with their howlings. The dull night air moaned deeply as if to lament over Kalidas's distress. The dark gloomy night looked awful. Kalidas's heart beat audibly. He was at his wit's end. At last mustering up his courage he climbed up an old big *Banyan* tree to save himself from falling a prey to

the wild beasts. He tied himself up against a branch with his *Pagri* to prevent an involuntary fall.

In this state, more dead than alive, the poet clung to the branch for some time. As the night advanced, the denizens of the *jungle* began to return to their dens after having satiated their hunger. The moon which had hitherto been giving light to the other half of the world began to peep from the eastern horizon and the forest assumed a milder aspect. When there was a dead calm, a conversation in low tone from the tree-top attracted Kalidas's ears, he heard two voices speaking as follows :

First voice.—“Dear ! Have you not promised to satiate my yearning for human flesh? *Enceinte* as I am ! I hope, you will not be unmindful of your promise”

Second voice.—“Yes, my love ! I have not forgotten it”

First voice.—“But, pray, dear, when would the happy day come? You have kept me long in expectation.”

Second voice.—“To-morrow, in any quantity dear !”

First voice.—“Any quantity ! How can that be ?”

Second Voice.—“I have devised a plan and if it succeeds we would have a big feast over human flesh for some days together. I have presented before the Raja Vikramaditya a couple of old human skulls : one of a male and the other of a

female, and have asked him to distinguish the one from the other within seven days which would expire to-day. If the Raja fails, and fail he must, as the solution of the problem is far beyond the reach of human knowledge, the men and the beasts of his realm will be our victuals. Is it not a good plan? my love !”

First voice.—“Yes, dear. But pray tell me how the problem can be solved ?”

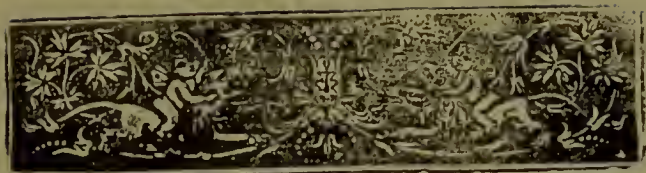
Second voice.—“No human science can solve it ; there is only one practical way which is unknown to men, and it is this : If a flexible wire be pressed into the ear-hole of the skull and it makes its way towards the throat it must be a male skull. The reason is, that men, being entrusted with a secret keep it safely in them and do not speak it out, so the canal of the male skull from the earhole runs down towards the throat. But with the female skull the case is otherwise. The wire when pressed through the earhole is sure to pass out by the mouth, as no sooner are women confided with a secret than they speak it out. Do you think, any human intelligence could be shrewd enough to unravel such a mystery? Pray, don't be annoyed with me dear, as my riddle relates to a merit of your fair sex.”

First voice.—“Certainly not, dear. The plan is excellent indeed ! Oh ! I only wish that the day had dawned earlier.”

The speakers stopped. Kalidas's heart leapt

with joy. He remained motionless for a few minutes, and then with the utmost caution to avoid the least chance of creating a noise, he slowly climbed down and ran towards the capital as fast as his legs could carry him. On he went all the way running, and just as the day dawned he reached the Palace gate, panting for breath. He met the king and told him of his adventure and good luck. The happy tidings spread throughout the kingdom and the people began pouring back in numbers. The "Nine gems" assembled and before midday, everything was almost in its former order again.

The *Rakshas* came at the appointed time and asked the king for the reply to his query. The king pointed out Kalidas as the person who would give it. The two skulls were brought out and Kalidas pressed a wire through the earhole of one of the skulls and finding that it passed towards the throat, he said, it was of a man and explained the reason. He then tried the other skull and the wire being pressed into its earhole went out by the cavity of the mouth. He declared it to be a female skull, and gave the reason. The *Rakshas* though discomfited, was glad to find that human intelligence and knowledge were not inferior to theirs. He bowed to the king and disappeared. It is needless to say how heavily he was admonished by his greedy spouse on his return home with the unwelcome news of his failure.



X. WHAT IT IS TO BE A NOKAR (SERVANT).

IT was a pitchy dark and windy night, a heavy downpour of rain had just ceased having caused the streets and the pathways muddy and slippery. It was midnight. A respectable-looking old man was scudding on the highway leading to the ancient capital of Dehli. He was going towards the Palace of the Emperor. A messenger of the Emperor followed him. But just as the man had entered the city, down came the rain in torrents again with all its fury, and the big drops of it struck as so many arrows upon the weary traveller. It was impossible for him to proceed further. He took shelter under the eaves of the thatch of a hut that stood by the side of the road. The occupants of the hut—a man and his wife—who were half-awake enjoying the chilly night in their warm bed, started at the sound of the hurried foot steps of the traveller. The wife asked her husband in whisper “who makes that sound, dear?” “Wait,” replied the husband, “my love, he may be a burglar out on house-breaking. Let me see.”

"Don't get out" said the wife, "it can never be a thief. A thief would not stir out of his house in this tempestuous night."

"Yes, you seem to be right. Then it might be a hungry jackal or a dog."

"Not even that. Beasts would not leave their dens in this killing downpour, even if they would die of hunger."

"What else could it be then?"

"It can not but be a *Nokar*. A servant of some body, and most likely that of the *Pádshá*, the penalty for delay in appearance to whose summons is death. The Emperor might have taken a fancy to send for some one of his servants even in this dark and stormy night, and this wretched person is hastening to his master, and has perhaps taken shelter for a moment under our thatches to save himself from the pelting rain. A Padsha's servant is no better than a galley-slave."

No sooner had the wife ceased speaking than a voice outside the walls murmured: "Yes, good lady! your surmise is correct" and the sounds of a man's retreating footsteps were heard. The person was no other than the old vizir of the "*Dehli-shwaro-ba Jagadishwaro-ba*" (the Emperor of Dehli or the Monarch of the world), he was sent for by his master, and on his way to the Palace had stopped for a few seconds there to take rest in the beating downpour of the stormy night.

Leaving the couple in surprise the Vizir hurried on to his master, and after carrying out his mandate, he most humbly tendered his resignation. The Emperor was surprised at this sudden action of his faithful Minister, and asked for the reason. The Vizir knelt down, and explained all that had happened on his way to the Palace, and said: "Sire! may I be pardoned, a *Nokar* I shall never be again, even a woman hates a *Nokar*." He then bowed low once more to the Monarch and issued forth from the royal chamber, plunged into the deep darkness outside, and disappeared.





XI. THE FOUR MERCHANTS, AND THEIR CAT.

IN Kashmir, in ancient times, there lived four young friends of birth and position. They took it into their heads to start a joint trade in woollen piece-goods for which the valley was particularly famous. Each of them made an investment of a *lac* of Rupees in the business. The choicest fabrics manufactured in the country were collected and stored into the *Godowns*. But the mischievous rats made a great havoc in the goods, and it became apparent that something must be done at once, to get rid of the pests. The partners met and decided to bring out a strong and sagacious Persian cat which species of the feline kind enjoyed, at that time, the particular reputation of being the cleverest opponent of these mischievous rodents.

In due course the cat arrived. It was a splendid animal. The legs being the most useful limbs of a cat the friends thought it necessary to be very cautious in respect of any possible injury to them. Not depending upon the servants, as the animal was purchased at a great cost, they each of them took upon himself the responsibility of taking care of one

of its legs, for which they entered into a solid compact.

It so happened, that one night as the cat was in chase after the rats, his movements upset a bale of goods, which contused one of his hind legs. The partner in charge of this leg called a Veterinary expert for the treatment of the limb. The surgeon came and bandaged the leg with cotton soaked in turpentine. The cat, as usual, was a restless animal, and unmindful of the doctor's injunction for thorough rest, he moved about with the three other legs that were still sound. One night when the establishment had retired to sleep, he caused, in one of his limpish walks, the bandaged leg to take fire from a *chilam* which a servant had just smoked. As the bandage was soaked in turpentine, it was easily in blaze. The cat in pain and fright made his way to the *godown*, and jumped from bale to bale thus setting fire to the entire stock. It was too late when the servants awoke. The goods had already been reduced to ashes.

The next morning, the partners met and the member in charge of the wounded leg of the cat was held liable for the entire damage caused by the fire, as it was through the leg in his charge that the catastrophe happened. An action for damage was brought against him in the King's Court, and the best available legal practitioners were engaged on both sides.

On the last day of hearing the court room was

thronged to suffocation. The wise old Judge sat on the Bench with a solemn face, and the counsel for the plaintiffs made a long harangue in support of his clients' claim, and was almost sure he had won the case. The old counsel for the defendant who, up to this time, had been sitting silently in a corner, now rose, and addressed the Court thus in a brief and concise speech: "My Lord ! I have very little to say in this case. Your Lordship is already aware that the leg of the cat in charge of my client was disabled on account of the injury, and could not move whereas the other three in charge of the three other partners were sound, and capable of locomotion. It is a fact that the cat's wounded leg was bandaged, but had not the legs in charge of the other partners been active, the animal could not have reached a fire nor could he scatter it over the house. The catastrophe had, therefore, been caused entirely by the locomotion brought about by the three sound legs. It is, therefore, that my client is entitled to damage instead of being liable in it."

The Judge, for a few minutes, deeply considered the learned counsel's sound arguments, and at last decided the case in favour of the defendant.

The anxious crowd watching the case loudly applauded the worthy counsel and dispersed

The defendant went home in a merry mood, not forgetting to amply remunerate his counsel who had saved him from a heavy damage.



XII. HOW A LOVER WAS SAVED.

THE system of finger print, which is being so widely introduced into almost all the Departments of the British Government, is believed to have been in vogue in China several centuries back. The following story will show how the Chinese first caught the idea of this system of identification.

In days of yore there lived in Peking a wealthy Mechanical Engineer with an extensive business. His working yard covered many Bighas of land and gave employment to hundreds of workmen. The Engineer was old and childless. An orphan niece of the Engineer, the sole comfort of his old age, lived with him, and he was dotedly fond of her. It was believed in the neighbourhood that he had made a will, bequeathing all his property, moveable and immoveable, to his darling niece. The Engineer's niece was just in her sixteenth year, and was one of the prettiest girls in the city. She had the smallest feet, which the Chinese value so much as an emblem of beauty. She was well accomplished, too. Being the heir apparent to such a wealthy Engineer, she lacked not in riches. In short, she had everything

what a person would wish for. It is no wonder that several suitors daily bent their knees to court the favour of such a charming, accomplished and wealthy damsel. The fair fame of the Engineer's niece went so far that some members of the Imperial family even were attracted to seek her hands. As the adage goes, the girl had more suitors than the number of her old slippers. It was, however, a peculiar characteristic of the belle that she gave encouragement to none of her suitors, rather she scorned with such haughtiness their fervent solicitations that they lost heart and thought it prudent not to molest her any more. In a very short time, all the suitors of this beautiful damsel, except a peasant youth, left her one by one. Now it was no longer a secret that the Engineer's niece took a fancy for the rustic youth and that was why she had been so very cold to her other suitors. The uncle of the damsel soon came to know of this. He reprimanded his niece for her foolishness, and passed strict orders to his servants that the peasant suitor might not have ingress into the house again.

On the night of the very day this order was passed, the Engineer was murdered in his bed-room, and his office desk and some other boxes were found broken and contents tampered with. The grief of the niece knew no bounds. She was extremely disconsolate. The Police were at once sent for, and they began investigation. The suspicion of all

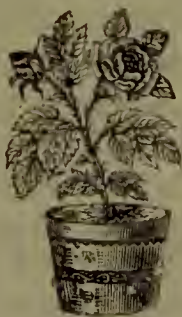
concerned fell upon the unfortunate rustic suitor ; and as he was found missing from his house, the suspicion grew stronger. A vigilant search was instituted to find him out. He was at last arrested and thrown into the Imperial Jail.

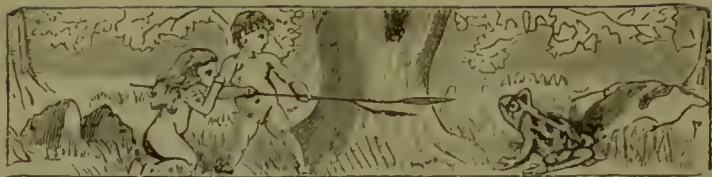
The damsel, before she fell in love with the rustic suitor, had well sounded his heart ; and she could not, for one instant, harbour the thought that the foul deed could have been perpetrated by her lover. The shock of her uncle's death was yet quite fresh in her mind when she received the sad intelligence of her lover's peril. She became quite distracted and knew not what to do. After a couple of days' fruitless musing, one night she went to the house of an old Detective officer who was known to her, and requested him to prove the innocence of her lover and to find out, if possible, the culprit. She swore by every thing sacred to her to the innocence of her lover, and represented the case before the Detective in such a piteous manner that the iron heart of the Police officer was moved. He asked the lady whether she could give him any clue wherewith to trace out the real culprit. The lady vacantly stared at the Officer not knowing what clue she would be able to give him. An idea suddenly struck her and she thought of the bloodstained bundle of paper in her possession, which she had secured from her uncle's bed-room on the night of his murder ; but she was not very confident that it would be of much help in

finding out the murderer. However, she hastened home, carried the bundle and showed the blood finger-prints on it to the Detective. The officer examined them minutely, and his face brightened up. The girl observed it, and eagerly asked him if the bundle would be of any use. The Detective asked the damsel to go home, leaving the matter to him, and assured her that he would leave no stone unturned to trace out the real culprit.

The girlish simplicity with which the Engineer's niece represented her lover's case to the Detective, left no room for doubt in the officer's mind about his innocence. The Officer thought that if the lover was not the murderer, who else could he be. His suspicion fell upon the workmen of the Engineer. He took up the bundle once more and closely inspected the blood-prints on it. He found the print of the thumb to be more distinct than the marks of other fingers. With his superior's permission, he went to the house of the murdered Engineer and sent for all the employees of his firm. As the thumb-print on the bundle was of the left hand, he asked them to ink their left thumbs one by one on a tin slab he took with him for the purpose, and print them on a piece of paper against their names. When this was done he with a lens carefully compared all these prints with the one in his possession, and was glad to be able to declare that one of the impressions was quite similar to that on the bundle. He then

asked the workmen to examine themselves which one of the impressions on the paper tallied with the blood-print. The workmen were all unanimous in supporting the verdict of the Detective, and the real murderer was secured, who made a clean breast of everything. The murderer frankly stated that he was on the look-out for an opportunity to rob the Engineer and, if necessary, to kill him ; and he found the day of the occurrence suited him best, as on that day the Engineer stopped the visit of her niece's suitor to the house, so if he could carry on his plan successfully that night the suspicion would naturally fall upon the suitor, because a disappointed lover can do anything and everything. The innocent lover of the Engineer's niece was set at liberty, and he was shortly married to her lady-love. Finger-prints from that day began to grow into importance in China.





XIII. MAGHEYA DOMS OF BIHAR.

THOSE who had occasion to live in Bihar know very well what a terror the Magheyas were in days gone by. These depredators had no fixed home,—their favourite retreat was the Nepal Terai, and their field of action Bihar, north and south. They had selected the Nepal Terai evidently to escape from both the British and the Nepal police. When chased by the former they would climb up the Nepal Hills and make themselves scarce in that territory, and when wanted by the latter they would come down the Hills and conceal themselves in the Terai *jungles*. They were generally a robust, stalwart, well-built set of bold ruffians, and their women were no less strong and courageous. Through the exertions of Sir John Edgar, the then Magistrate of the district, most of these homeless ruffians were induced to settle down to peaceful lives. He gave them lands and ploughs and taught them to cultivate the soil and live honestly. Had this not been done, I am afraid, these marauders would have, by this time, far out numbered the countless trees in

the *jungles* they lived in. Some of the Magheyas are, however, still seen plying in the old boat, though they have considerably dwindled down in numbers. It might be in the recollection of many with what dexterity the valuables of a Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal were robbed at Sonapur Camp, by these Magheyas from an iron safe, to which a bulldog was tied. The following story is an illustration of the Magheya Dom's wit and pluck. I heard it while in Bihar, and the narrator vouched for its truth.

In days gone by a Detective Police Sahib was sent out from Calcutta to Bihar to put a check to the depredations of these robbers. The Sahib and his suite, on arrival there, pitched their tents in a big mango grove, and began work. No sooner had the Magheya Doms got scent of this, than they formed a league to checkmate the Sahib. But it was a very hard task they had undertaken. The Sahib's camp was guarded by armed sentinels day and night, and it was not an easy thing to get in there. However, one Magheya youth formed a bold plan to out-wit the Shahib.

One dark night the gallant hero, with a few pieces of rope and other requisites, stealthily creapt out of his den. On reaching the grove in which the Sahib was encamped, he climbed up a tree that stood at the farthest end, and made his way towards the camp by jumping from tree to tree, silently and briskly like a squirrel; where the trees

stood far apart for a successful jump, he tied a piece of rope to the tree he was on and with its help, swung on to the next. In this way he continued his stealthy approach till he reached the big mango tree under which stood the sahib's tent. The sentinel, as usual, paced to and fro before the tent, never dreaming that a man from above would drop into his master's tent at midnight.

Now the Magheya had to get into the tent, and he had a plan ready made. He looked on all sides and finding the coast clear, tied a stout rope to one of the overhanging branches of the tree, and with a burning charcoal made an opening at the top of the tent sufficiently large for his ingress. It did not take him long to reach within his enemy's tent, where he found a candle burning and the Sahib fast asleep in his bed with his *memsahib*. The glistening gold watch of the Sahib on the dressing table and a precious diamond ring on the finger of his fair spouse attracted the Magheya's immediate attention. In the twinkling of an eye he secured the articles, and fearing lest the Sahib should awake, he made a hasty retreat, heaving, of course, a deep sigh for the other valuables that he had perforce to leave behind. He then joined his comrades who were at a safe distance anxiously waiting for the return of the hero of the night.

The next morning the Sahib found his watch missing, and enquired about it of his wife who gave

a faint shriek and asked her husband if he knew of her ring. Now there was a confusion in the camp. The servants and guards were all summoned but none knew anything about the watch or the ring. At last the opening in the tent cloth was noticed, and the truth dawned upon them. Heaven and earth were moved to trace out the robber. But the Magheya boy had shown a clean pair of heels and all search and all effort to recover the stolen property went for nothing. When every means failed the Sahib proclaimed a free pardon and a reward, if the daring burglar would voluntarily surrender himself and restore the articles. This had the desired effect. The Magheya boy appeared before the Sahib with the watch and the ring and got the promised reward.





XIV. A PLAGUE STORY.

IN days of yore when time was young there once broke out in Asia a terrific bubonic Plague. Millions of people fell victims to the malady. The pious King of Bharat was frightened out of his wits and summoned all the old and wise priests of his realm to devise means to arrest the progress of the Plague. When the priests assembled the King said: "Holy fathers! the Plague has come very near to my kingdom, advise me what steps should be taken to save my people." The priestly assemblage after close consultation came out, and the foreman addressed the King as follows: "Sire! this is a visitation from the Almighty God, there is no way of escaping it save by appeasing His wrath, for which we should burn incense and offer prayers." The King accepted the advice and ordered the necessary expenses to be met from the Royal exchequer, for *Pujas* and prayers.

A week after, the priests began their work, one midnight God Rudra appeared unto the senior priest, and said: "What dost thou want me for?"

The priest's hair stood on end and he made a low bow and thus stammered out : "Lord ! all-knowing as thou art, thou knowest what we want—save us from the impending Plague." The God replied : "Thy prayer is granted, my orderly Nandi shall guard thy country against all evils," and vanished.

Early next morning this happy intelligence was communicated to the King by the priests, and they each got 25 milch-cows and 50 *kahans* of *kouris* as their reward, and departed in all glee.

Now Nandi was posted to see that the Plague might not enter into the Kingdom. He had been vigilantly watching day and night, when one night as he was on his rounds along the frontiers of the kingdom, the grim Plague assuming body and shape appeared before him and wanted admittance. Nandi showed a bold front, and with his uplifted trident, vociferated : "Be gone, Villain. A step more and you are no more." The hideous figure would not give way so easily and the result was a terrific scuffle between the two giants. It continued long, and several hills were demolished and many trees were uplifted, by coming in contact with their adamantine bodies. At last a truce was made, and they came to terms. It was agreed that the Plague would stay for a day in the capital and take only one man as his victim.

Next evening a hue-and-cry was raised in the city, and it was reported that fully one hundred men

had died of Plague. The King at once sent for the priests and asked for an explanation. The priests not knowing what answer to give, hastened to Nandi, and asked him the reason. Nandi grew furious with rage and unable to give any reply ran out in search of the Plague. No sooner did he meet him on the dusty floor of an ill ventilated house than he caught him by the neck and thundered forth: "Rogue! you have broken your promise, and have taken one hundred persons instead of one only contrary to what you so solemnly pledged your words to. You shall pay dearly for the breach of your promise." The Plague pealed out a hideous laugh and replied: "Brother! be not angry with me, I have not broken my promise. I did actually take only one man for which I pledged my word, but the other ninety nine died out of fear only. They had simple fever and ordinary glandular swellings, and these they mistook for the signs of my approach and died. Thinking further parley unnecessary, Nandi let go the Plague from his iron grip. The priests informed the King of this and left.





XV. THE KAYASTHA AND HIS PARROT FEATHER.

ONCE upon a time there lived in Bengal a poor *kāyastha*. He was so ill off, that he could hardly get two meals a day. His poverty was mostly due to his idleness. His wife constantly rebuked him and asked him to go abroad and search out an employment, but he paid no heed to it and idled away his time at home. One day, at last, the wife's patience gave way, and in a fit of anger she struck her husband with her broom—the favourite weapon of offence and defence of the Indian woman. The *Kāyastha* felt it keenly and left home at once. He determined not to return unless and until he had secured an employment.

So he set out on his journey and went on for days not knowing where to go. One evening he reached a river bank, and there being no boat to ferry him across, he was obliged to pass the night under a big tree that stood on the bank. Fatigued as he was, he soon fell asleep. But it being midwinter, the cold chilly night air pierced keen into his body. He awoke and sat

up. A conversation between two voices on the top of the tree in a low tone reached his ears. He listened to it attentively, and was at first afraid as to who the speakers could be. Were they ghosts or goblins? But to his relief he soon found that they were a couple of *Suk* and *Sári* (a parrot and his mate). At the time to which our story relates, the birds could converse as well as sing. They talked thus :—

Suk.—"We have got a guest to-night under our tree, *Sári* dear; as we can't feed him at this time of the night, we should help him in some other way, he looks so very poor."

Sári.—"Yes, darling! Certainly, that is what I was just going to tell you. Do something for him, pray. How could we help the poor man?"

Suk.—"If men, when in distress, had the power of finding out the right person to apply to for help, they would not have been unhappy. But their weak intellect fails to distinguish such a man. There is, however, a means of knowing it. If a feather of my wing be stuck on a man's ear, he would immediately acquire the powers of distinguishing. I tear out a feather and throw it down for our guest that he might use it to his benefit."

Saying this, the *suk* plucked out a feather and flung it down, the *káyastha*, who was anxiously hearing the talk with his ears and eyes wide open, readily picked it up and secured it carefully. No sooner did the day dawn than he retraced his steps homeward.

Just on entering the town he put the feather on his ear. Good heavens! What met his eyes! The busy town appeared to him an assembly of wild beasts! He cast his eyes on a cloth shop and saw a jackal selling out cloth to a monkey; in a confectioner's shop he saw a donkey preparing sweatmeats. An ass sitting in a chariot and four driven by an ape surprised him most. The numerous pedestrians on the pathways were, as many beasts of different kind and class. He wandered over the whole town, but failed to meet with a single genuine man. At last, being quite disgusted, as he was leaving the town, his eyes fell upon such a man, in a shoe-maker, who sat on the pavement of a house with a few pairs of shoes before him for sale. What! thought the *káyastha*, could the genuine man be a shoe-maker? To be sure of the magic feather on his ear, he touched it, and found it in its proper place. He then drew near to the shoe-maker and asked him to procure for him a suitable employment. The shoe-maker was surprised to see a gentleman standing for help from an insignificant man of low caste like himself. He knew not how he could be of any use to him. However, after a few minutes thinking, he told the *káyastha* to come to him a week after. The Kayastha left, but dared not return home unemployed as he was, being afraid of further inflictions from the favourite weapon of his angry spouse. He, therefore, passed

the whole week elsewhere and on the day fixed saw his patron.

In the mean time, the shoe-maker had made a very neat pair of shoes for the King. He devoted his best skill and ingenuity to their making and spared neither pains nor cost to give the shoes the best finish. When the *kāyastha* came on the appointed day, they both set out for the Palace, the shoe-maker taking the shoes under his armpit. As the shoe-maker was not unknown to the King they easily gained the Royal audience. The shoe-maker bowed low to the King, placed the pair of shoes at the foot of the throne and stood at a respectable distance. His Majesty was so very pleased with the *Nazar* (present) that he at once asked the shoe-maker to name his reward. The tanner bowed again and prayed for a Royal favour upon the poor *kāyastha*. His Majesty kept silent for a few minutes. He inwardly praised the nobleness of a low caste shoe-maker. The prayer was at once granted. The *kayastha* got an appointment in the Raj, soon gained Royal favour and rose to a high post, but he never forgot his *Muchi* (tanner) benefactor.





XVI. THERE IS MANY A SLIP BETWEEN THE CUP AND THE LIP.

AT the corner of a rice field, in a bush, there nested a hedge-sparrow with his mate and two young ones just out of their eggs. It was the beginning of the cultivating season and the field in which the nest stood was shortly to be ploughed up. The she-sparrow, on this account, was very much anxious for the removal of her young ones to a safe place. She asked her mate, but he paid no heed and told her to wait as it was yet too early to consider the question.

On the next morning the farmer came, as usual before ploughing, to inspect the field, and ordered that ploughing should commence from the next day. The anxious mother grew more disconsolate, and again besought her husband to remove the young ones, but got the same reply. The next morning, the ploughing of the *khet* began. The mother again pressed her mate but with no better result. The plot under cultivation being a large tract of land the ploughing was not finished that day, but it was certain to be completed the day following.

On the next morning the ploughing was resumed and it began to advance gradually towards the nest of the sparrows. Now the parent bird made a piteous appeal to her husband not to lose any more time but to remove the young ones at once. The apparently indifferent husband did not pay any more consideration to her wife's appeal, than he had done on previous occasions, and asked her, to wait as the time was not yet up. At this, the she sparrow was highly angry with her mate and told him how foolish and cruel he was in delaying the removal of the young ones, as within a few minutes more the plough would run through their nest and the poor young ones would be buried in the deep furrow. She asked him to bestir himself as there was yet time to save them. The old bird got angry at the repeated requests and rebuked his mate thus :

"You foolish bird, you are always hasty. You should know that many things might happen in the twinkling of an eye ? Who knows that the advancing ploughs might not come to a stop at once and for good ? Wait, the time is not yet up."

The she-sparrow seeing further bandying of words useless kept silent. She submitted herself to her fate and taking the dear ones under her wings patiently waited for her fate with them. The ploughs every moment shortened their distance from the bush, at last they came right close to the nest. In a few seconds more the nest would be

under the earth, when at the supreme moment, lo! there rose a huge column of smoke from the farmer's village and with it the cry of "Fire!" "Fire!" The ploughmen looked up and perceiving the fire in the direction of their quarters hastily unyoked the bullocks and ran towards their village as fast as their legs could carry them. Before, however, they could reach home, the fire had done the mischief. The whole hamlet was reduced to ashes. All the seed-grains of the farmer were destroyed and the *khet* remained fallow for the year.

The cock-sparrow now caressing his mate said :
"My love ! Now you see the truth of what I said—
"There is many a slip between the cup and the lip."
The consort in reply lovingly pecked him with her bill.





XVII. HOW TO DIE.

ONCE on a time a King's priest was performing his *Pujas* at a ghât of the Ganges after his ablutions, when a harlot came to bathe there and carelessly splashed the water causing a few drops of it to fall upon the person of the priest. The priest's meditation was disturbed and he flew into a rage and poured forth a volley of violent invectives on the woman. The harlot did not lose her temper but simply smiled, and said : "Poor man ! I pity you, your *Pujas* and meditations are all a sham, it seems you have no control over your mind and you know not how to die." This remark incensed the Brahman all the more, and he ran towards the woman to strike her, but she being far more active and agile than her persuer, showed him a clean pair of heels.

The angry priest went to the King and complained against the woman. The harlot being summoned appeared before His Majesty. The King asked her why she had insulted the priest. The woman fell on her knees and addressed thus : "Sire ! I could hardly have the courage to insult even a dog

of your Majesty much less your priest. The fact is, that while I was bathing in the Ganges, some particles of water accidentally touched the priest who was then worshipping there. And for this the priest spared me no abuse, and when I made some just remarks on his conduct he even chased to strike me. I am at a loss to understand what offence I committed.

"And what did you say?" asked the King.

"Sire!" replied the woman "I conceal nothing from your Majesty, I told the priest simply that if the mere touch of a few drops of water could rouse him from his reverie, his meditations and *Pujas* were only superficial, and that he would surely err at the time of his death. For this, if your Majesty finds me guilty, I am at your feet,"

"What do you mean by erring at the time of death," asked the King.

"It is plain enough, Sire!" replied the harlot, "what I mean is that a man, when in real meditation, finds the external world dead to him. And those merely pretending it, are susceptible to the touches of physical matters as was the case with your Majesty's priest. Such a shallow meditation does not help a man in his spiritual progress. He would err *at* the time of trial and more especially at his last moment. And it is said that a dying man builds his future in accordance with his last thoughts. If it pleases your Majesty I can illustrate it by a practical example when I get a dying man."

"Well," said the King, "I wish you to do this. A dying man is not a rare thing in my vast dominion, one at least can be had, every day if not more,"

The King dismissed the harlot and giving orders that the case of the next dying man should instantly be reported to him, left the court room.

It so happened that on the next morning the priest was suddenly taken ill and was about to die, and his case was reported to the King. His Majesty hastened to the priest and the harlot was also brought in. They found the priest gasping for his last breath. The harlot prayed to the King for a few minute's private audience, which was granted. When the King was alone, the woman produced a delicious plum of extraordinary size from her waist and asked him to see whether the fruit was intact or it had any hole on it. The King examined it minutely and was satisfied that the fruit was a perfect one of its kind and had no mark whatever on it. The harlot then begged the King to hold the fruit at its best display before the eyes of the dying priest. The King did as he was requested ; the fruit was held just before the dying priest's eyes, and he greedily looked at it and died.

The King with the plum in his hand left the room signing the harlot to follow him ; when they entered the hall of private interview, His Majesty asked her to explain the mystery. The woman begged his Majesty to break the plum. The King did so and to

his utter astonishment found a big red insect inside the fruit eating upon the kernel. Before he had time to recover from his surprise and question the harlot, she began ; “ Sire ! your priest, as I said, did not actually know how to die. At his last moment, he thought of tasting this trifling plum, and had thus his fleeting spirit confined after death in the fruit in the form of this insect. Had he known how and what to think of when dying, he could have soared higher above all earthly things.”

His Majesty was very pleased to find such spiritual advancement in a fallen woman. He dismissed her with handsome presents, and from that day forward he began to practise how to die a better death.





XVIII.—THE DERVISH AND HIS RECIPE.

ONCE there lived in Northern India a young Moslem King, who unfortunately was impotent. He passed his days in bitter grief as he had no prospect of getting a son and heir. The charming sight of the beauteous bevy of ladies in the harem only augmented his grief the more. Hindu physicians and Mahommadan Hakims did their best, but failed to cure the malady.

One day the king heard that a Dervish had come to his capital with specifics for all incurable diseases. A faint ray of hope dawned upon his sad and gloomy mind. He hurried to the Dervish *incognito* as his malady was known but to a few only within the Palace walls. The *Faquir* having heard, what ailed the king, produced a small phial of an elixir, drank three-fourths of its shining contents himself, and made over the rest to the king with instructions to use it for three days successively in the morning in equal doses, and guaranteed a thorough cure. The king thanked the Dervish and left. He took the first dose the next morning—it produced symptoms of success. The second dose

brought him back to his normal state ; and the third inflamed his hitherto dormant passion.

The joy of the king knew no bounds. But now as his peace of mind was restored, he got time to think of the extraordinary powers of the *Faquir* in freely consuming the three-fourths of the elixir at a time, one-fourth of which taken in three days had kindled his passion to such an extent. He became anxious to learn the secret and went to the *Faquir*. After the necessary exchange of *Salams* the king addressed the *Faquir* thus :—"Father ! I do not know how to thank you for the cure of my disease, your elixir has marvelous powers. I am here not only to thank you for my cure but to have a doubt removed from my mind. You drank three-fourths of the elixir at a time and gave me only one-fourth of it for three days' use. I know well how it worked in me, and I wonder how could you, a holy saint, after taking so much of the liquid at a time, bear its effect without being excited." The Dervish remained silent for a few minutes, and then replied solemnly : "Sir ! I will satisfy your curiosity to-morrow, if you live till that time. Now the first thing I should do is to make an attempt to save your life which is about to be extinguished. I know a bit of occultism. I know who you are and that your days are numbered. By the rising of to-morrow's sun you are destined to die. However, I shall try and see, if there be any chance of saving

you. So saying he took another phial of his elixir and poured its contents to the last drop down the king's throat. The king mechanically swallowed it all. A mortal terror shook his whole frame. He gasped for breath and tried to ask further questions, but failed. The Dervish asking the king to go home, at once disappeared into his hut.

The King dragged himself home with much difficulty as his legs were quite unwilling to perform their functions. He entered his Seraglio. Many a smiling face stood round him, and embraced him lovingly, but the king took no notice of them ; their appearance rather pained his aching heart the more. He was absorbed in one painful thought, that of an imminent death. He spoke not a word, went straight off to his bed chamber, commanding no visit till called for, shut the doors, and attempted to take a sleep to forget the pangs of death. But alas ! the goddess of Sleep made herself scarce that night, she forgot to visit the royal chamber. The King rolled in his bed to and fro. The soft downy bed felt as if made of thorns. The terror of death gnawed the very marrow out of his bones. The night appeared a dismal one. The striking of the hours and half hours from the royal tower clock seemed to him to be the tolling of his own death knell ! With the waxing of the night the agony of death increased. At last the king fell into a stupor and lay unconscious. When he awoke or rather came to his

senses, he saw the sun's rays penetrating into his chamber by the window crevices. The sun was up and he lived to see it. Oh ! what unspeakable joy he felt ! His face brightened up. He had a new lease of life. He hastened to the *Faquir* whom he took to be its saviour.

The Dervish, who sat in the *varanda* of his hut, seeing His Majesty approach smiled and asked : "Sire ! how did you enjoy your Begams last night ?" "Enjoyed the Begams !". replied the King astonished, "I who had to die this morning ?"

"I knew well you would not die so soon, Sire !" said the *Faquir* calmly, "but I frightened you by way of giving a practical illustration in answer to your question as to why I was not upset by taking almost the whole of the elixir, a few drops of which maddened you. Now you find that when the spectre of grim death is before one's mind, it shuts up all the doors of its chamber tight and close against all earthly desires. I made you drink a whole phial of the same elixir, to rouse your lust, yet it failed to make the slightest impression in your mind as the terror of death had its sway there. Your Majesty saw the phantom of death for one night only, whereas I see it dancing before my eyes every moment. Could I possibly indulge in other thoughts ? My life's aim is to prepare myself for death and, for this, I welcome and cherish it at all times in my mind. Now go, but forget not this lesson."

Saying this the Dervish bowed and disappeared.



XIX—THE WOUNDED PADSHA.

A MOGUL Emperor, while practising with his sword one day happened to wound his arm. The sycophant courtiers who were there, expressed their deepest regret and even shed crocodile tears for the slight cut of their royal master. But the Vizir who was also there, kept silent till the courtiers had finished their condolence. Then he said: "Sire! it is a sad thing indeed to see the arm of an Emperor bleeding, but I congratulate your Majesty on it instead of being sorry, because I believe that whatever happens to a person even death itself is always for his good only. Who knows that the cut might not some day turn to the benefit of your Majesty? The faculty of prevision is denied to us and we fail to take a glimpse of the future. Be sure, Sire, that the wound is undoubtedly for your benefit." The Emperor did not relish what his Vizir said. He rather got a little annoyed and left the place without speaking a word in reply to his Minister. The wound being a slight one he cared not much for it.

The Emperor to test the sincerity of the Vizir's

belief in his theory and to prove its hollowness to him, went out hunting taking the Vizir with him the next morning. They rode into a dense forest and bagged several games. At last they chased after a deer, and ran deeper into the jungle leaving their followers behind, but could not overtake the animal which disappeared in one of the secluded recesses of the vast wilderness. The fatigued horsemen losing sight of their game reined up their horses and dismounted by the side of a well to take rest. No sooner was the Vizir seated there than the Emperor suddenly pushed him down into the well saying: "Vizir! whatever happens to a man it is always for his good." He then mounted his steed and rode off for the capital. But he had not proceeded far when two black figures stout and stalwart with poisoned arrows on their bows drawn up to the ear and ready for the fatal shoot, emerged from the forest depth and stood in front of the horse. One of them thundered forth: "A step more and you are a dead man, get you down and follow us." The Emperor seeing resistance useless dismounted from his steed and had no choice left but to follow the two strangers. After an hour's journey they reached the yard of an ancient temple which stood in the most secluded part of the forest. There throwing the Padsha into a cell the captors disappeared. The Emperor remained in the dark dungeon in extreme anxiety

and suspense knowing not what was in store for him. Evening drew on, the forest wore a gloomy appearance, and the sylvan denizens raised up terrific howlings which resounded from one end of the forest to the other and trilled the beating heart of the mighty Monarch, now a captive. At midnight the cell door was thrust open and the Monarch dragged out. It was pitchy dark outside, the night being a new moon one. He was made to bathe and was then conducted to a sacrificial altar. An earthen oil lamp cast a dim light within the temple which made the place look more dismal. The Monarch now realized his dreadful position. The altar before him was that of the Goddess *Kali*; and it being the new moon night the devotees of the Goddess were to offer a human sacrifice, and he was to be the victim. He grew paler than death. The two black captors rudely placed him upon the altar, where the slayer calmly waited with the shining *Kharga* (Sabre) in his hand. The High priest performed the necessary rites, and as he was going to put the garland on the intended victim's neck he suddenly stopped and looked hard upon the captors and exclaimed: "Fools! you do not know how to select a man for sacrifice? See, you rascals, the man has a wound. You should have known that such a sacrifice is not acceptable to Mother *Kali*. Away with him, and get another quick before the

day breaks." The servants bowed and left the place at once in search of another man. The Monarch's horse was then brought in and he was asked to mount and depart at once. But he was sworn not to reveal what he had seen and suffered there and was warned that the influence of the secret worshippers was vast and extensive and that he would not be able to escape vengeance if he betrayed them. The Monarch leaped into the saddle mechanically and galloped away and disappeared in the depth of the dark dense jungle. He struck his way towards the well in which he had thrust his Vizir to see what had become of him. The night being dark and the way meandering the Monarch with much difficulty and trouble reached his destination at the dawn of the day. He found the Vizir in the well and took him out by means of his Pagri (turban) cloth. When the Vizir was safely landed the Monarch begged his pardon for his cruel action and soothed him with soft words. He then revealed what had happened to him and how he had narrowly escaped death, and frankly admitted the truth of the Vizir's theory, and said that it was the wound on his person that had saved his life. The Vizir bowed and said that his Majesty need make no apology to his humble servant because in throwing him into the well he had rather unknowingly been the saviour of his life, for had he not been into the well, he would have been taken a captive along with His Majesty and would have

surely fallen a victim to the sylvan Goddess, as his person was free from wound. The Padsha then returned to his capital with his Vizir, sadder but wiser.





XX.—THE TWO RIVAL CHIEFTAINS.

IN the outlying region of the mighty Himalayas there lived, in ancient times, two rival Chieftains, one old, and the other young. They were always at logger-heads and measured their swords on more than one occasion. To expand their territories they were perpetually seeking to dethrone each other. The younger chieftain being of a designing nature, at last, succeeded in gaining over the Commander of the old Chief's army, and was thus able to conquer, capture, and banish the latter with his wife and children from his kingdom.

The old Chieftain, being thus expelled from his realm, journeyed on, exposed to rain and the sun without shelter and without food. The tedious journey was intolerably painful to the delicate queen and her children, one of whom was a sucking babe. They had neither money nor men with them, and the queen who once kicked at the golden balls rolling at her feet, had now to walk on foot for miles and miles, in fatigue and sore-feet with the poor infant in her arms. The children cried for food

but the parents had none to give them. The old Chieftain's heart bled at the sight, but there was no help for it. Providence, however, interposed in one way. The queen and her children unaccustomed as they were to exposure, fatigue and privations were soon taken ill and died. The old Chief became frantic in grief and resolved to put an end to his miserable existence into the waters of the Manas Sarobar.*

To Manas sarobar, therefore, the old Chief went and writing down his wishes for the next birth on the marble tablet there, as was the custom, jumped into the limpid waters of the lake and disappeared.

Here the young Chieftain having made a new conquest was spending his days happily. The only

* *Manas Sarobar* lit. *the Lake of mind* so called from *Mānas* or mind of Brahmā who created the lake. It lies in the Tibetan plateau to the north of the Himalayas, where the Brahmaputra and the Sindhu take their rise. This large body of water consists of beautiful twin lakes—Manas, and Raksal. The Kailas mountain—the sacred abode of Hara and Parvati, rises high to the north of this lake. Manas is of the shape of a jack fruit and Raksal is like a guava. Three rivers take their rise in the southern waters of Manas and run along the northern skirts of the Himalayan range. The water of Manas is blue and thousands of white celestial swans sporting in it day and night augment its beauty. Mythology says that Brahmā, riding on his Swan used to come daily to bathe in Raksal, but being subsequently disgusted with the waters of the lake abandoned it and created Manas by its side. To increase its sanctity, he blessed it so, that persons bathing in the waters of Manas, would have all their sins washed off and, those dying in them would have their *Manas* or desires realised in future births.

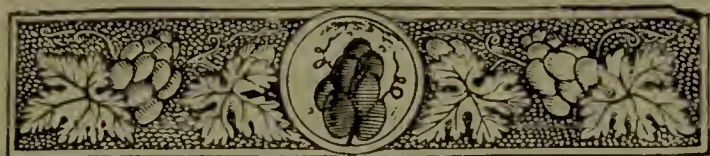
thing that troubled him was that he had no issue. He performed many rites to propitiate the deities to get a son but to no effect. One day an ascetic gave him a piece of a root and directed that it should be taken by the queen. The queen took the root, conceived and in due course gave birth to a boy brilliant like unto the moon. There was a general rejoicing all over the realm. The child grew up and was placed under the tuition of eminent Pandits. Within a short time he became a master of all the *Shastras* much to the delight of his father.

Time rolled on and the prince grew a young man. But he died all on a sudden in his twenty-first year. The heavy shock broke the ruler's heart and he felt his life unbearable. He made up his mind to die in the waters of Manas Sarobar. So abdicating his kingdom to his Muntri (minister) he went to the lake to put an end to his existence.

As was the custom, the chieftain went to write his last wish on the tablet at the lake before taking the fatal plunge. But no sooner had he looked at it than his eyes met the signature of his deceased antagonist. With great curiosity he read the manuscripts and to his utter surprise learnt that the dying wish of his rival had been to be re-born a son unto him and die in his twenty-first year. Such was the way in which he sought to agrieve his enemy and to take vengeance.

So the young chieftain became easy in mind, as he now perfectly understood that his deceased son had been no other than the revengeful spirit of the late chieftain. He retraced his steps to the capital and began to reign again in peace.





XXI. THE PANDIT AND THE GOLDSMITH.

THE following story is an illustration of the fact as to why sometimes virtue obeys vice.

At the beginning of the *Kaliyug* (iron age) there lived at a village in Bengal a Pandit and a goldsmith. The former was learned and religious, the latter, though a skilled workman, was very crafty and cunning. Though their nature and position were so different yet, strange to say, they were fast friends.

The vast learning of the Pandit and the ability of the goldsmith in turning out jewelleries, not being appreciated by their villagers, they were obliged to leave the village to try their luck elsewhere.

On they went for days together up hill and down dale till they reached Nepal. There the two friends hired a hut and lived together. The Pandit thought that unless he could gain admittance to the Raj-Darbar he had no chance of success. He, therefore, composed a *shloka* (verse) in sanskrit and presented it to the king. The eligance, sublimity, and originality of the verse secured for the Pandit a seat in the Raj-shava (court) on a hand-

some salary. In a short time, the merits of the Pandit attracted the special notice of the king, and he gained royal favours and became the head of the Shava-Pandits. With the Pandit's elevation in the court his income increased. But the goldsmith remained in the same state of indigence as before. The Pandit cast about for a means to provide for him, but did not for a long time succeed in hitting upon one that promised success. At last, an idea struck him and he asked the goldsmith to return home and to start a business there. The cunning smith gladly agreed and left for home with ample capital supplied by his friend for the business.

In due course of time the goldsmith reached home, and started a business which flourished in leaps and bounds. On the goldsmith's asking for more funds to expand the business the Pandit readily made more remittances, in all amounting to a *lac* of Rupees. The firm flourished marvelously well and the smith amassed vast wealth. He raised a palatial building, bedecked his wife and children with precious ornaments and drove in a charriot-and-four. But he utterly neglected his friend's wife and child. The Pandit's old hut in the meantime dwindled down for want of repairs. His wife and his only child starved. But the wily smith kept his friend misinformed of all these facts. As in those days, postal communications were unknown, the poor wife of the Brahman could not communicate her grievances to her husband.

Days lapsed together. The Pandit grew anxious to return home. But the king would not part with him. With much difficulty, however, he obtained leave and came home. On reaching his village, he was quite surprised to see the wretched condition of his hut and that of his wife and child. The former was reduced to a mere rotten framework of bamboos with almost no covering to it, and the latter looked like two living skeletons clad in torn rags. His heart bled at the sight and he stood aghast. Then exchanging a word neither with his wife nor his boy, he frantically ran towards the house of the goldsmith. But lo ! what met his eyes ! There in the old site of the smith's hut stood a big mansion, the gate of which was kept by two stalwart upcountry Darwans. The Brahman in sheer indignation and impatience made a mad rush to enter the house, but was rudely kept back by the gatekeepers. He, however, made a desperate effort again and tore himself off from the hands of the keepers and ran towards a well furnished hall where sat the goldsmith surrounded by his *mosahibs*. As soon as the Pandit met his so called friend, he exclaimed : "Thou hast ruined me, friend !" Not giving him time to speak another word, the goldsmith thundered forth : "Stand back, fool ! who art thou ?" And he ordered a servant to turn the Brahman out of the house, not forgetting to reprimand him for his carelessness in permitting the intruder to enter

the house. The order was promptly carried out and the poor Pandit was forthwith ejected.

The Pandit's rage and grief knew no bounds. He went straight away with his boy to the reigning Sovereign at Hastinapur and laid his case before His Majesty. As he had no witnesses to prove his case he prayed, to be permitted to take the oath on the head of his boy so that if it were false the boy would die. Oaths in those days were held in solemn regard and the sovereign granted the Pandit's prayer. The goldsmith was summoned and a day fixed for the trial.

On the appointed day people began to pour in from far and near to see this extraordinary trial, and the Darbar-hall was crowded to suffocation. The king entered the Hall and took his seat. The goldsmith was brought in and the charge against him was explained, but he denied it entirely. The Pandit was then asked to take his oath and to prove his charge against the goldsmith. Up rose the Brahman and all eyes were fixed on him. A piece of copper, a leaf of *Tulsi* plant and a few drops of Ganges water were placed in his hands. He then touching his child looked up to the heaven and said: "I do hereby solemnly declare by the name of Narayan that I did actually pay a *lac* of Rupees to the goldsmith and that he has deceived me of it, and if what I say be untrue let this my only boy die instantly." No sooner was this uttered

than the Brahman's child dropped down dead. The Pandit stood petrified. He wanted the earth to open and swallow him. The Sovereign censured the Brahman and left the Hall. The sightseers abused the Pandit and threw dust on him. The goldsmith won the day and went home triumphant.

In bitter grief and shame the Pandit hid his face and left the Hall. He ran frantically till he reached a river-bank where he stopped and thought of putting an end to his miserable existence by drowning. As he was just going to jump down into the rapid current of the stream, he heard behind him clattering of horse's hoofs and with it a loud voice calling out: "Hold back, fool! Hold back." He turned back and to his utter surprise saw a colossal dark figure in black uniform armed cap-a-pie riding fast on a sable steed advancing towards him. In the twinkling of an eye the horseman approached and thundered forth to the Pandit: "Fool! why art thou bent upon thy destruction? can'st thou not hope for better days yet? Hark unto me and do my bidding. Knowest not thou that the age thou livest in is *Kaliyug*? Carry out *Kali Raja's* behest and you will be happy, for on telling the truth thou hast lost thy boy. Go back to the sovereign and tell him that thou hast given two *lacs* of Rupees to the goldsmith and thy dead child will revive. Fail not to do what I say. I follow

thee unseen. See in me the *Kali Raja*." Saying this the black god vanished. The Pandit now found that even death refused him shelter. He was not at all willing to go back to the sovereign, but yet he was afraid to disobey the god's mandate.

He went back to Hastinapur and with great difficulty persuaded the sovereign to hold a second trial of his case. A day was appointed and the goldsmith was brought in, but he again denied owing any money to the Pandit. The Brahman took the same oath as before and said that as he had made a mistake last time in stating the correct amount of his advance to the goldsmith his son died but now that he declared the right sum of two *lacs* of Rupees to be his due, his dead boy would be animated. No sooner was this said than up stood the child. There was a general rejoicing. The goldsmith was banished beyond the Himalayas and the Pandit was installed in his mansion.

In the night of the Pandit's installation the goddess Virtue appeared unto him in her white flowing garb and whispered: "Unfortunate man! I pity thee. Thou hast sold thyself body and soul to the *Kali-Raja* for transient earthly happiness. Thou wilt have to repent bitterly for it as thy eternal future is marred."





XXII. THE SIGNET RING.

TODAR MALL the most trusted Minister of Akbar Sha the great Mogul Emperor of India, was the custodian of his signet ring. The tradition connected with the ring is well known to many. It possessed charms and could make or unmake a king.

One summer morn Todar Mall went to bathe in a river with this ring on his finger ; while washing himself the ring accidentally slipped off and disappeared into the water. The Minister quaked with terror. He dreaded the consequences and was afraid of losing his head as punishment. While thus in consternation, lo ! up rose the ring suddenly to the surface of the water. Todar mechanically picked it up. His joy knew no bounds. But at the next moment a mortal terror shook his whole frame, as he was under the belief that such an abrupt turn of good luck was to be followed shortly by a dire catastrophe. Sorrow begins where happiness ends. So he returned home in a melancholy mood.

No sooner had the minister reached home than a posse of the Emperor's men appeared with a writ of arrest. He was then seized and thrown into the

prison But here his misfortune did not end. The prison diet allowed him was utterly inhuman. He was given only half a seer of unhusked paddy and a little salt and was ordered to strip each grain of the paddy with his finger nails. The rice thus obtained was his day's food.

A few days passed in this way. One evening, after having prepared his hard earned meal, when about to partake of it, the jailor appeared and informed him that his son waited at the jail yard to see him. The prisoner left his meal and hastened to see his son. They met, fell on each others neck and wept. After the interview was over, the hungry minister returned to his cell to take his food. But lo! to his misfortune, the jailor's mastiff had finished the food clean off the iron plate. Todar wept silently and fell down struck with hunger and grief. He soon recovered, however, as a ray of hope brightened his gloomy heart. He believed that his misfortune had reached its zenith, and that such a culminating misfortune was to bring him a good luck. His heart became light and he patiently waited for better days.

While the minister was thus thinking, the cell door opened and the jailor appeared and asked him to see His Majesty who was waiting outside. The minister hastened out and was embraced by the Emperor, who told him that he was imprisoned under a mistake and made an ample apology for his

ill treatment. The minister then related to His Majesty the incident of the loss and miraculous recovery of the signet ring and that of the prison diet being devoured by the mastiff and asked him not to think any more of what he did in a hasty moment. The sufferings he had undergone were the fruits of his own *Karma* (action) and His Majesty was an instrument only.

The Emperor and the minister then left the prison-yard together.





XXIII. THE FATE

IT was mid-night. An earthen oil-lamp was casting a dim light within a low built thatched hut at a certain village in Lower Bengal. The occupants, a young Brahman and his youthful wife, were locked up in the fond arms of profound slumber. With sudden start the husband awoke and saw a straw falling down from the thatch. No sooner had the straw touched the floor than it turned into a Cobra-de-capello and in the twinkling of an eye stung the sleeping wife, who muttered a groan and expired. The Brahman could not believe his senses in what he saw and remained stupified for a few minutes. But as the mysterious reptile was making its way out of the hut, he followed it to know something more about it, leaving the cremation of his wife to be performed by his relations.

After going a few yards from the *Brahman's* house the snake turned into a jackal and bit a boy who happened to be outside his house. The boy instantly died. It then made its way out of that village and entered another. The Brahman followed it unseen. It was now day break. The animal took the shape

of a dog and bit and despatched some persons of that village. It then rushed towards the high-road, the Brahman still pursuing, ~~him~~ On the road it transformed itself into a bullock and gored to death some of the pedestrians and went onward. It stopped under the shade of a banian tree and took the shape of a beautiful damsel of sixteen, and sat there with a melancholy face, but displaying her beauty to its best advantage

It so happened at the time, that two Rajput-brothers, were striking the same road on their way home after a long military service in a Raj-estate. My tale relates to the pre-Railway days. The two brothers were going on foot and were armed to the teeth, as in those days *Dacoits* and *Thugs* were not uncommon.

The fascinating beauty of the solitary girl attracted the attention of the travellers. They drew near and asked her, as to who and what she was and why she was alone there. The girl bent down her bashful face and murmured in a low voice: "Pray Sirs! one of you get me a glass of water first before I can reply to your queries, I am dying of thirst."

The elder at once hastened with his *Lota* (brass-pot) to get water, leaving the damsel with his younger brother. In a few minutes he returned, and to his utter astonishment found the girl beating her breast, tearing her hair and crying in extreme rage. He was perplexed and asked the female what had up-

set her so shortly. She stood erect, drew up to her full height, and stared furiously at the younger soldier. The blue veins of her face and neck swelled with rage. She looked like a furious tigress, and stamping her foot she thus replied: "My noble deliverer! this cowardly wretch of a soldier wanted to dishonour me; I, who delivered myself unto you at the very first sight, asked him not to touch me, but the brute used force against me an unprotected and helpless woman;" and she again burst into tears. The blood of the elder brother rushed up all at once and in sudden passion he drew out his sword and challenged his brother to fight for his misconduct.

Though the younger brother knew perfectly well that every word of his accuser was false and that his elder was labouring under a misapprehension he cared not to wait and explain the matter, as none but a coward Rajput would delay the measuring of his sword with any body when challenged to a fight. The Rajputs, in those days, had very odd and peculiar customs in challenging. The twisting up of the mustaches was one of the oddities. The readers will kindly allow me a digression to relate a story by way of illustration: A Rajput once went on an invitation to a friend and when talking together he involuntarily twisted up his whiskers. The host took it to be a positive challenge to a fight, went in and killed his wife and children to save

them from disgrace in case he should die, and returned to his friend with a drawn sword ready to fight. The guest was quite astonished at the sudden change of attitude of his friend, but shortly found out that the careless twisting up of his mustaches was the cause. He soon brushed the whiskers down with his hands and the friend triumphantly laid aside his weapons. But the gallant soldier had already done the irreparable mischief in his family at the time of preparing himself for the fight; nevertheless he was in all glee over his so called victory and did not lament the loss at that moment.

But to return to the story. No sooner was the younger brother challenged, than quick as lightning, flashed his sword from its sheath. He asked his elder to defend himself. Their swords crossed. Both being good swordsmen, they fought furiously. But the loss of blood exhausted them so, that they both sank down and expired.

The mysterious damsel who had been laughing all this time in her sleeves, now stood up and made her way towards the dense forest that lay near the road. But the *Brahman* rushed towards her hastily and said: "Mystic! for so, you are, I followed you and watched your dark deeds since you killed my wife last night. Now tell me, who and what are you? I will not allow you to part thus."

The girl turned back, looked hard at the *Brahman* and replied: "It is impossible. Leave me at once.

Dare not cross my way," and quickened her pace. The desperate Brahman obstructed her again and pressed her for a reply. The irate girl vociferated :

"Leave me, if you care for your life "

"Life?" calmly replied the Brahman. "I carry it in my hand, and care for it, as little as for the dust under my feet."

Seeing the Brahman resolute and desperate, the girl smiled and said :

"I am the goddess Fate. To fulfill my mission I did what you call dark deeds."

The Brahman stood silent for a moment in astonishment. But as he became curious to know his own destiny, he again questioned her :

"One word more and I'll let you go."

"What is it?" Asked the goddess.

"How, when and where shall I meet my death?"

"I can't say."

"You can and you must say "

"No. I cannot."

"Then I'll destroy myself in your presence and you would be its cause."

"No, you can't, the date is yet far off."

"Oh! then you know it and must tell it to me."

The goddess seeing it was useless bandying words with the desperate Brahman replied: "At the age of sixty in the river Ganges you shall be swallowed by a crocodile," and she vanished.

The Brahman stood aghast to learn his sad destiny. He did not return home as it stood on the bank of the Ganges ; but went on and on for months together in the opposite direction till he reached a village where the very name of the Ganges was known but to a few only. He took his abode there in the house of a zemindar.

The zemindar was rich but had no son. A few months after the Brahman's advent he got a boy. When the child grew up he was put under the tuition of the Brahman as he was a good Sanskrit scholar. Gradually the boy grew fond of his tutor to such an extent that he would not leave him on any account. He ate and slept with him. The Brahman was held in great regard by the family as shortly after his arrival in the house, the master of it was blessed with a boy. A few years passed on. The boy grew up to a young man and his tutor became old.

Now the famous *yog Govinda dwadashi* drew nigh. Persons performing ablutions in the Ganges during the *yog* would have all their sins, past and present washed away. Crowds of persons started on the pilgrimage. The zemindar also made up his mind to take a bath in the river with his family, on the occasion, leaving his house in charge of the Brahman. But the boy would not go without his tutor as he was so fond of him. The zemindar was consequently obliged to alter arrangements and asked the

Brahman to accompany him. The Brahman grew pale at the request and was greatly embarrassed and knew not how to avoid it. Finding no means of escape, he at last disclosed everything. To leave the boy behind was out of the question, as he being the only child of the zemindar's old age and the sole comfort of the family could, on no account, be left behind. But to induce the Brahman to accompany the party, was what puzzled the zemindar most. He explained to the Brahman that if all his fears were only for the crocodile, he would have the bathing *ghat* protected with stout iron railings and strong wire-netting in which case possibly he could have no objection to accompany the party. The Brahman at last agreed.

On a fine morning the party started on the pilgrimage and in due course reached the river. The *ghat* was safely protected. The Brahman was satisfied with the arrangements. Now, the hour of the *yog* arrived and the party went into the waters for their ablutions. And the Brahman also went in with his pupil ; but no sooner had he dived than he was caught between the jaws of a monstrous crocodile which jumped over the railings to free waters with the victim and disappeared. Before the Brahman was consigned to the capacious stomach of the crocodile, it whispered to him thus. "Old man ! your pupil is no other than the Fate himself, whom you met years ago. With all your precautions you could not avoid

your destiny. The decree of Fate is inevitable. It is only on account of my telling your future beforehand, that I had to undergo the pains in a human womb." So saying the crocodile devoured the Brahman and plunged into the water.

The zemindar and the party returned home in extreme grief.





XXIV. THE BARBER AND THE GHOST.

IN the District of Burdwan, there lived a barber who was very idle. He would do no work, and devote all his time to his toilet which consisted only of an old looking-glass and a broken comb. His old mother constantly rebuked him for this, but to no effect. At last, one day she got extremely annoyed and in a fit of anger struck him with a broom, she was sweeping with, at the time. The young barber took this chastisement to heart and left home, determined never to return, unless he had amassed wealth. He repaired to a distant forest, in order by prayer, in its deep silence, to move the gods to his help. But no sooner had he entered it than he met a Brahma-Daitya (a ghostly spirit of a Brahman) dancing before him. He became extremely frightened and knew not what to do. However, he soon took courage and devised a plan to discomfit the Brahma-Daitya. With this purpose in mind he too began to dance, and asked the Ghost : "Pray, why are you dancing?"

The Ghost laughed and replied in a sonorous

voice. "You seem to be an arrant fool not to understand the reason. It is simply because I wish to make a sumptuous feast upon your delicate flesh, but, tell me what made *you* dance?"

"I have," retorted the barber, "far better reasons : our king's son is dangerously ill, the physicians have recommended for his cure the heart's blood of 101 Brahma-Daityas and His Majesty has proclaimed by beat of drum to give away half of his kingdom and one of his beautiful daughters to any one who would be able to get the medicine. I have, with much difficulty, captured 100 ghosts and in you I make up the full number. I have seized you already and you are in my pocket." So saying he took out his pocket mirror and held it before the Brahma-Daitya's eyes. The terrified Ghost found his image in the glass by the clear moon light and thought himself actually captured. He trembled and prayed the barber to release him. The barber did not agree at first, but on the Ghost's promising him wealth worth seven king's ransom he subsequently yielded but said : "Where is the wealth, and who is to carry it and me to my house at this dead hour of night?"

"The wealth" replied the Brahma-Daitya, is "underneath yonder tree, I shall presently show it to you and carry you with it on my shoulders to your house in an instant, as you know we spirits have superhuman powers."

Saying this, he uprooted the tree and brought out seven golden jars full of precious stones from there. The poor barber wondered at the sight of the shining wealth but cunning as he was, he concealed his emotions and boldly ordered the Ghost to carry the jars and himself forthwith to his house. The Ghost obeyed, and in an instant the barber was safely carried home, with the wealth. The Ghost then prayed for his release, but the wily *Narasundar* not wishing to part with his services so soon, asked him to cut the paddy of his field and bring the crop home. The Ghost believing himself still under the clutch of the barber readily consented and went out to reap the corn.

As he was cutting the paddy, a brother ghost happened to pass that way, and finding him thus employed, asked for the reason. The Brahma-Daitya replied that he had accidentally fallen into the hands of a shrewd man and that there was no means of his escape unless he had reaped the paddy. The other ghost laughed and said: "Have you gone mad, my friend! We ghosts, are beings superior to men and are more powerful. How is it possible that a man would have any power over us? Can you show me the house of your captor?"

"I can," replied the Brahma-Daitya, "but from a distance as I do not venture to go near it till I have reaped the paddy." They then both left for the barber's house.

Meanwhile the barber having obtained so much wealth had purchased a big fish to give a treat to his friends, but unfortunately a cat having entered the kitchen through a broken window had eaten up a good portion of it. The barber's wife was awfully angry and wanted to kill the animal, but it escaped by the route through which it had entered. Expecting a return, as the cats generally do on such an occasion, she stood concealed with a fish knife in hand by the side of the window. Now the Brahma-Daitya having shown the house of the barber to his friend from a distance went back to the field. The other Ghost was approaching stealthily towards the house to have a look at his friend's captor. Coming near the kitchen he thrust in his bushy head through the broken window by the side of which, the irate wife had been standing, expecting the return of the mischievous cat every moment. No sooner, therefore, was the head of the ghost pushed in, than the wife struck a severe blow with her sharp knife causing a clean cut of the tip of the ghost's nose. In pain and fright the ghost ran straight away, ashamed of meeting his friend with a disfigured face.

The Brahma-Daitya after having reaped the paddy got his release. The wily barber this time, presented the back of his mirror before the ghost, who, not finding his image in it, was satisfied of his release and went home merrily.



XXV. NARAYAN OUTWITTED.

HERE lived once in Bengal, a Brahman, who was childless. As, according to the *shastras*, a man must rot in hell, surnamed *Put*, unless he leaves behind him a son, the Brahman was in great anxiety for his future lot. Having performed many rites to have a son to no effect, he at last made up his mind to repair to a secluded place and pass his days in devotion to propitiate the gods that he might be blessed with a boy. Accordingly he left home and went to a remote recess of the mighty Himalayas and put himself there in deep meditation. His fervent prayers at last reached heaven and Narayan appeared unto him and asked him what he wanted. The Brahman begged a son. "A son thou canst have," replied Narayan, "as it is not thy lot to be a father; ask for some thing else."

As the Brahman would not have any thing but a son, the God vanished. The Brahman again fell into prayer with more zeal; the kind God appeared again, but the Brahman repeating the same boon, He pleaded inability and disappeared. Finding that the God was determined not to bestow on him a son, the Brahman hit upon a plan to outwit him.

For the third time, therefore, he began praying and the merciful God appeared again. He prayed that his merriments be shared by men and gods alike, with him. Finding no impropriety then at the request Narayan readily granted it and ascended up to heaven.

The Brahman returned home and told his wife all that had happened and about his plan. Early next morning they took a substantial meal, shut themselves up in their hut and indulged in wild dancing. No sooner had they begun the dance than the gods above and the men below mechanically joined in the merriment. All began to dance, and business was stopped in heaven as on earth and only dancing went on. None knew the reason of this universal disorder. All were astonished. A general confusion ensued. It was midday, but still the universal mechanical dancing went on. The gods failing to find out the reason proceeded to Narayan dancing all the way. They reached Golak Dham (abode of Narayan) and to their surprise found Narayan and his consort Lakshmi dancing as well.

Now, a divine conference was held and it was found out that a Brahman on earth was abusing the boon granted to him by Narayan. So, with Narayan at their head, the gods descended, dancing and went to the Brahman's house, who, perceiving their approach through a crevice of his broken door, increased the speed and force of his dancing and took bigger

leaps and bounds than before. The gods had to do the same and in doing so their heads knocked again and again, against the low thatches of the Brahman's hut and got bruised and bled. The old scalp of the ancient Brahma was awfully lacerated. But there was no help. It became now the turn of the gods to propitiate the Brahman to bring back order and peace into the creation. They requested him to stop his dancing and to come out. The Brahman would not agree unless and until the promise of a son was made. The gods finding no other means of getting over the fearful confusion in the creation had to yield to the Brahman's demand. The dancing ceased, and order and peace were restored once more in heaven and on earth. In due course of time a son was born unto the Brahman, and he lived in peace ever after.





XXVI. THE KING AND THE JACKAL.

IN Guzrat, there once lived a prince who had a very beautiful wife. He was so much fond of his spouse that the people called him an effeminate husband. The prince had learnt from a Sadhu (Saint) the art of understanding the utterances of the lower order of animals.

One morning while they were strolling in the palace garden the prince's attention was drawn to the cawings of a Jackdaw and its mate, and he smiled. The hen-Jackdaw was sorrowfully lamenting to her male that if she were a queen how happily she would have walked by his royal side like the princess before her. The male consoled her by saying that they might attain that stage of life in some of their future rebirths but, for the present, they should be content with their present position. The queen having observed the king smiling at the cawings of the crows asked him for the reason. The prince in reply, regretted his inability to comply with her request, and said that if he would divulge the secret he would die instantly, because the holy saint who initiated him into the art of understanding the languages of

the brute creation, warned him, on pain of death, never to disclose what he would hear from them. The queen grew persistent, however, though she was told how very fatal it was to her husband to comply with her wishes. The prince tried again and again to convince her that in satisfying her curiosity, he would have to sacrifice his life. But the foolish queen still persisted. The king being uxorious had, therefore, no choice left but to yield, and he asked the queen to accompany him to the sea as he wished to die in its waters for, die he must, after the disclosure*. The queen agreed. While standing in neck deep water, the king was about to make the revelation the conversation between a Jackal and his mate attracted his attention. The she-Jackal seeing a floating corpse in the sea asked her male to get it for her. The latter got angry, and rebuked her thus : "You foolish brute ! to satisfy your greed I can't risk my life in the boisterous waters of the sea. I am not a fool like that effeminate king, who is going to sacrifice his valuable life only to satisfy his wife's idle curiosity." Saying this he struck his consort with his right forepaw and went away.

The king got a lesson from the Jackal. He came out of the water, chastised his wife for her heartlessness and sent her in exile.

* The Hindus consider it a curse to die in the house. When on the point of death they are generally removed to the river or the sea side as is convenient.



XXVII. THE KING VIKRAMADITYA AND THE GOD SANI*.

DURING the reign of the pious king Vikramaditya there lived in Ujjaini a Brahman who had the misfortune of falling under the wrath of *Sani*. He suffered long and much. *Sani* did his best to make his influence felt keenly by the unfortunate Brahman. His house was burnt down, his wealth was gone, and he was even separated from his dear wife and children. The Brahman was reduced to such a wretched plight that at last the iron hearted *Sani* felt pity for his sufferings. The dreadful god relented and appeared unto the Brahman one night in dream and said :—"Poor man ! I feel for thee, thou hast suffered much, and the time has come when I should leave thee, provided thou canst make an iron image of myself and sell it for Rupees 1,001 and with it make propitiating offerings to me," and vanished. The Brahman awoke, bewildered and confused. He said within himself: "Do I hear aright? Are my sufferings to come to an end? Do better days await me? Was it really the relentless *Sani* who spoke to me? Has he

* A planatory God of Evil propensities in the Hindu mythology.

actually taken pity upon me, or are all these mere effusions of my heated imagination?" He thought upon the matter over and over again, and at last made up his mind to carry out the bidding of *Sani* though it was, no doubt, a very difficult task. But how to secure a purchaser for the image of the ireful god - the mere utterance of whose name creates terror in a man's mind - and specially one that would be willing to pay such a big sum for it, was the question that sorely troubled him. Like a drowning man who catches at the straw, he however, did not abandon the idea and went on thinking of one plan after another till he hit upon the one, following :

The truthful king Vikramaditya had started a new market and to make it attractive he had declared by beat of drum that any unsold article of the new Bazar (market) after sunset would be purchased by the State at the price set by the owners. The Brahman wished to take advantage of the king's liberality. He got an image of *Sani* duly made, went with it to the king's new market and exposed it for sale. The people at the Bazar took him to be a madcap for his bringing out a likeness of *Sani* for sale at Rs. 1,001. But the Brahman patiently waited at the market from morning till evening with his curious commodity for sale. None came to him. The sun went down and the evening approached. All left the Bazar, except the Brahman and one or two

other unfortunate vendors like him who remained to wait for the arrival of the king's market Jamadar to purchase the unsold articles of the day. In due time the Jamadar came to the Brahman and asked him what article he had unsold and its price. On the Brahman's producing the *Sani* and asking Rs. 1,001 for it, the Jamadar was surprised. But as he knew well that the king never withdrew his declaration, he told out the money instantly and took the novel commodity to His Majesty. Vikramaditya on seeing the image, only thought for a moment then ordered it to be taken to the Thakurbari (Puja-houses) and to be duly worshipped there with the other gods. The Brahman returned home in a merry mood and worshipped *Sani* with the price of his image and saw better days.

Now let us go once more to the palace to see how fared the king with the *Sani*. On the very night the grim god was installed in the Thakurbari, the Raj-Lakshmi (goddess of fortune) appeared unto His Majesty and addressed him: "Prince! So long I had been living peacefully in thy house, but now as thou hast got *Sani* into it I must leave. Thou knowest well that *Sani* and myself are always at logger-heads and that I can not put up with him."

The king bowed and replied: "Mother! I have already apprehended this misfortune, but to be true to my words I have had to get *Sani* into my

house, and when once he has been introduced into it I can not do away with him. I must not fail in virtue though I be reduced to a beggar of the street. Pray, consider the circumstance and do what you think best." The goddess mournfully nodded her head and melted into the thin air. No sooner had Lakshmi gone than Narayan appeared and said that as his consort had left, he could not with propriety stay in the palace any longer and went away. The other gods and goddesses of the palace one by one thus took leave of the king till, last of all, came the god *Dharma* (Virtue) and asked His Majesty's leave to be off. The king with tears in his eyes fell at his feet and prayed thus: "Dharma Raj I thou canst leave me, thou must stay to keep the fair fame of thy name. Thou knowest full well what led me to get *Sani* into my house and to part with Lakshmi, Narayan, and the other gods and goddesses. I have risked all this only for thy sake and to have thee at my side. Now it is for thee to decide how thou shouldst act."

Dharma meditated a little and said "Yes I can't leave thee" and went slowly back to his place in the house.

Here all the gods and goddesses after having left the palace had been wandering all over the country to find out a suitable house to dwell in. But not finding Dharma Raj any where they could not select any. They can not live in a house where

Dharma does not reside. The morning was drawing nigh and there was no time to lose as they could not expose themselves to mortal gaze. They hastened back to see if Dharma had been loitering in the palace and found him there, but with all their persuasions they failed to induce him to leave it. And as they could not live without Dharma they were obliged to re-enter the palace of Vikramaditya and to dwell there.

On the next night the god *Sani* appeared to the king, in a milder mood and addressed him thus; "Oh virtuous Vikramaditya! I am very much pleased with thy truthfulness and the strength of thy mind, thou hast stood thy trial well. I give thee my word that henceforth the wrath of *Sani* will never fall upon thee or any of thy progeny." So saying he disappeared.





XXVIII. THE BIDHATA* OUTWITTED.

THERE was a general rejoicing all over the kingdom of Magad, as a boy was born unto the king; *Nautches*, *Tamashas* and merry making went on in almost all the thoroughfares and public squares of the town and its suburbs. The old minister alone did not join in these festivities as he was anxious to know the future destiny of the royal babe. He, at last, hit upon a plan to effect his purpose. On the sixth night after the birth, as the Bidhata would come to inscribe the future destiny of the infant on its skull, the faithful minister thought of availing himself of the opportunity to get the information from Bidhata direct. The expected night approached and he sat with his legs stretched out on the threshold of the room in which the queen lay confined, and waited the arrival of the Writer of destinies.

At midnight when the world was plunged in solemn stillness and the people of the palace were

* *Bidhata* or *Bidhata Purusha* is a diety of the Hindu mythology, his duty is to ascertain the destiny of a newborn babe and inscribe it in hieroglyphics on its forehead on the sixth night of the birth.

fast asleep, a tall figure clothed all in white was seen stealthily approaching the lying-in room. He came near the door kept by the minister and asked him how he dared cross his path, and to move away. The minister knowing him to be the Bidhata replied: "Dev! Excuse me, I can't, unless and until you have promised to tell me what you would write on the boy's forehead."

"It is impossible," retorted the god angrily, "clear out, or sit there at your risk."

"I have enjoyed life for sixty long years," muttered the minister, "and can now well afford to spare the rest of it if you so wish. I will not move an inch."

Seeing the minister resolute and desperate, and being afraid lest the people of the palace should awake Bidhátá agreed, and was allowed to go in.

After a few minutes the god came out and told the minister that the birth of the babe being in an evil moment, it would lose its parents at the age of fifteen and the kingdom would change hands; and that the boy would have to live upon hunting stags. So saying, he vanished. The minister went away in a melancholy mood. He, however, kept the secret to himself and watched the progress of time.

Just at the age of fifteen the prince lost his father and his mother and the kingdom fell into the hands of a rival king, who turned the boy out.

The prince, now an orphan, was thus thrown

adrift in the wide world alone and helpless. As he had no means to keep his body and soul together, he repaired to a *jungle* and lived upon hunting stags. The minister who had been watching the prince all along now came to his rescue, with a plan duly devised to outwit the Bidhata. He disclosed everything to the prince that he had heard from Bidhata concerning his destiny but assured him that there was still some chance of reversing the god's decree, if he would strictly follow his instructions. The prince readily consented. The minister asked him not to go into the forest any more for stags, but to wait for them at the outskirts of the town not losing heart, if he failed and starved for one or two days. With this instruction he left, promising to return within a fortnight.

On the next morning the prince went out of the town with his bow and arrows and stood at its frontier in wait for deer. He watched from morning till evening, but unfortunately no game turned up. He returned home disappointed and had to starve that night. The next day's adventure was as unsuccessful and he starved again. He was sorely disgusted and did not understand what the old councillor meant by this hard ordeal. However, he obeyed his orders and on the next day went out hunting as usual. This day he met a deer, killed and sold it at the market and lived on the amount it fetched.

Thenceforward he bagged a deer every day during the rest of the fortnight, without going into the forest. After the expiry of the fortnight, the minister returned to see the prince, who told him all about the hardships and privations he had undergone and of his subsequent success. The minister now asked him not to leave his hut for stags, but to wait at the door, and he left with a promise to see him again after a fortnight. The prince did as he was bid. But no stag turned up at the door for three days successively and the prince had to starve all this time. The trial was harder this time, but he patiently bore it. At last, on the fourth day a stag ran up to his door as if God-sent and he killed and sold it and lived on its price. Now he got a deer every day at his door for the rest of the fortnight, after which the minister came again to see him. He asked the prince this time to shut himself up in his hut and wait for stags within doors, and left with a promise to return after a fortnight as usual. The prince carried out the minister's bidding. But the trial this time was very hard. No stag appeared for about a week and the prince had to fast all the time and was almost on the point of death. At last, however, one morning his hut door was forced open and a big deer rushed into it. The prince with much difficulty handled his bow and shot it. A fortnight passed thus and the prince got a stag daily within his hut.

The Bidhata fell into an awful fix. He had now to supply stags daily into the prince's hut, and he became sorely disgusted with the unpleasant task. One night he appeared unto the old minister and said : "I have been well paid for my foolishness in revealing what I wrote on the prince's forehead. How long would you want me to supply stags into the prince's hut ? Spare me the trouble for goodness' sake."

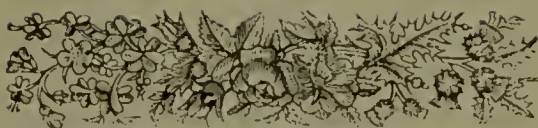
The minister started and saw the very same figure standing before him whom he had met some years ago at the door of the deceased queen's chamber. He bowed and replied : "Dev ! Your decree is fulfilled. Pray, now have mercy on the prince and restore him his father's *Gadi*."

The Bidhata relented and said : "I'll, you go and see the usurper of the kingdom with the prince and leave the rest to me," and he disappeared.

Early next morning the minister taking the prince with him went straight off to the usurper who forthwith vacated the throne to the prince and left for his own kingdom.

The prince was now installed on his father's throne and the faithful counsellor got his old seat once more by the side of his new master.





XXIX. THE CRANE AND THE CROW AS MINISTERS TO THE LION.

A CERTAIN Brahman was returning home during the Durga Puja holidays from a distant country where he served as a priest to a king. He was alone, and his way lay through a dense forest. The orb of the day had just gone down the western horizon, having cast its crimson rays over the distant landscape. The evening was peeping in with her gray mantle. The vast forest before the priest wore a gloomy appearance. He must cross it, anxious naturally as he was, to meet his family after a year's separation. So he made up his mind and gathering up courage entered into the jungle uttering thrice the name of the protecting goddess "Durga," "Durga," "Durga." When he had crossed half of the forest he came face to face with its king—a gigantic Asiatic lion. He was almost frightened out his wits and stood like a statue fixing his eyes upon those of the animal, who also remained motionless at the spot where he was. The minister of the Lion, a noble crane, who was close by, apprehended the impending danger to the priest, and to save his life readily devised a plan and addressed thus to his king: "Sire! May

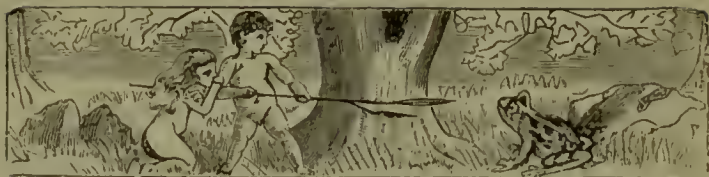
I take the liberty of reminding your Majesty that to-day is the *Sraddha-Tithi* of your Majesty's royal father and as Providence has been graciously pleased to send a *Purohit* (priest) just standing there, I think his services should be availed of for the purpose." The Lion consenting, every preparation was made, the necessary rituals were all duly observed and the *Sraddha* was gone through in all its details to a satisfactory completion. Plenty of gold and silver ornaments that had once adorned the persons of the unfortunates who had fallen victims to the Lion, were given to the priest as his *Dakshina* (remuneration). Thus, contrary to his expectations and naturally to his infinite delight, the priest returned home laden with the costly presents. He was received at the doors by his wife and children who had been anxiously waiting there for his return.

The priest spent the leave happily at home. In due time he left for his place of business and joined his service again. After having worked there for another year, he obtained his usual leave during the Durga Puja festival and set out for home. He so timed his start as to reach the forest just on the very day he had been there the year before, that is, on the *Sraddha* day of the Lion's father. On entering the forest he met the *Pasuraj* and they both stood still for a few minutes; for it is said, that so long as a man's eyes remain fixed upon those of a beast-of-prey, it would not attack him.

The priest waited anxiously for his noble patron the crane. But alas! he was disappointed. The ministry had been changed. A wily crow had taken the place of the good crane. The new minister who was not very far from his royal master no sooner saw His Majesty delaying, than said: "Sire! does His Majesty forget the request of the queen for some soft flesh?"

No sooner was this uttered than the king of the forest pounced upon the unfortunate avaricious priest and killed him on the spot. Then the Lion and his mate made a hearty meal of the victim, and after the royal banquet was over, the cunning crow applied himself with great alacrity to what remained of the carcass.





XXX. THE TWO FRIENDS.

AT a certain village in Bengal there once lived two friends, *Sat* and *Asat* ; the one being, as the names indicate, of good and the other of bad disposition. But though of different propensities, they were fast friends.

One evening, a Brahman was discoursing on the *Ramayana* at the house of the village landlord before a large gathering and *Sat* was going to attend it. He happened to meet *Asat* on the way and asked him to accompany him. But he refused and tauntingly replied : "I care very little for such idle prattles of an old fool, it is better that I should be engaged in some other quarter and make myself merry there."

Thus ridiculing, he left and spent the night in eating and drinking in a house of ill fame. But *Sat* attended the holy lectures from the beginning to the end in a truly pious frame of mind, and many a time shed tears at the pathetic portions of the discourse. Thus he sat till late at night in hearing the sacred epic explained with the sweet chanting of hymns by the Brahman, at intervals.

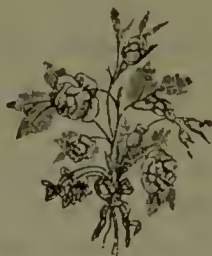
The two friends thus spent the night in quite opposite ways : *Sat* in practice of virtue and *Asat* in that of vice. But the former when returning home after the sermon was over, unfortunately trod upon a stout thorn of a Bel tree which went so deep that he could not walk and had to be carried home ; while the latter on his way home from the house of ill fame picked up a heavy purse of gold, that lay on his way. On hearing what had happened to his friend, he went to see *Sat* and found him lying in his bed, with excruciating pain. A mocking smile brightened up his face and he said "Friend ! you attended the sacred sermon last night and have had for your reward the tormenting prick of a thorn, but I who made myself merry in eating and drinking, got a purse of glittering gold. Now judge the merits of our actions by their respective fruits." Saying this, he took leave of his friend and went away.

Sat was confined to his bed for some days on account of his sore foot. When he was well, he left home in search of one who would be able to explain why they had such opposite fruits of their actions.

One day while he was sitting by the side of a river and thinking upon his puzzle, an old Brahman happened to come there. On seeing *Sat* melancholy, he asked what troubled him. The appearance of the old man was so very prepossess-

ing that *Sat* at once opened his mind to him and told everything. The Brahman smiled and said : "On that unlucky night according to your past karma (actions) you merited the *shula** but your good actions of the present birth mitigated your punishment and the *shula* was commuted to a thorny prick. As regards your friend, his good actions of past birth secured a crown for him, but his misdeeds of the present incarnation minimized his good luck to such an extent that he only got a purse of gold in lieu of the crown." Saying this, Narayan vanished, for the Brahman was no other than the god Narayan himself who had appeared only to remove the doubt of his devotee. *Sat's* peace of mind being restored once more he returned home in a merry mood.

* In ancient times, *shula* was a kind of instrument for putting to death the culprits capitally punished. It was a stout iron rod with a thin point at the top. The condemned person was made to sit on the top which penetrated into his body slowly and went out by the head.





XXXI. A KING IS NOT THE CREATURE OF MERE CHANCE.

THESE was grief in the kingdom of Rajgarh. The king had died without leaving an heir to his throne. As was the custom, the ancient Royal tusker was let loose to elect the successor. In those days, the oldest elephant of the State, was the king-maker when the last happened to die heirless. The great elephant of our narrative with an empty golden *Howda* on his back roamed over the town with the attendants of the late king, following. In the rear and in front of the animal gathered an immense crowd, every one of whom was eagerly struggling to get ahead as there was no knowing upon whom the mantle of honor would fall. The elephant left the town and veered round towards the suburbs, the crowd following him. While passing through a field of cucumber, the animal met a peasant boy working there. He looked keenly at the boy's face for a moment and as if being inspired, ran towards him, and taking him by the trunk, put him into the *Howda* on his back. No sooner was this done than

the rustic boy was proclaimed a king. The Royal band of musicians played a fitting tune and filled the air with sweet melodies. The golden State umbrella was stretched over the boy king's head and the elephant returned to the palace. The boy was duly crowned and was placed under the tuition of eminent Pandits.

The shrewd minister wanted to take advantage of the boy king's minority and inexperience. He believed that for some time to come he would be the *de facto* ruler of the realm, as the rustic boy would take many years to be able to govern his kingdom. But alas! he was mistaken. Providence ordained otherwise. The boy king showed marvelous tact and intelligence and in an incredibly short time he proved himself thoroughly competent for the throne. The wonderful skill and the extraordinary keen intelligence which he displayed in the administration of justice startled even the old councillors of the State, and extremely mortified the avaricious minister. The king perceived it and summoned the minister one day to his private chamber. When the minister appeared he showed him an unique *Chanpa* flower of pure golden hue and asked him to trace its source on pain of death, only giving him the hint that he had picked up the flower from the bank of the river by the side of his capital. The minister bowed and left with a trembling heart. He went home, but could not sleep that night. Early next morning he engaged a boat and

started on his journey up the river. After a week he began to find solitary flowers like the one in his possession here and there in the river. And as he proceeded further up the river he met more of them and gathered. On he went for about a month collecting all the flowers that came in his way. At last he came to a rock in the middle of the river round which clustered lots of flowers. There he cast anchor and went up the hillock. And lo ! what met his eyes ? From a bough of an old banyan tree there hung a headless human body. Every drop of the blood trickled down from it into a caldron of boiling *Ghee* (clarified butter) below, and immediately transformed into a beautiful *Chanpa* flower. The minister to his utter surprise found the head, which was just close to the tree, to be that of the boy king. He staggered and leaned against the rock. What was that he saw ? His new king was undergoing such an austere penance and sacrificing his life's blood to the gods for a kingdom.

Now the truth flashed into his mind that a king was made not by mere chance but by his own previous actions (*Karma*), which he saw his new king was performing. He returned to the capital wiser and fell down at the feet of his sovereign telling him what he had seen. Thenceforward he became perfectly loyal and adored his king.

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